

CORE VALUES BASED BRAND BUILDING:
INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDER'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY BRAND

A Dissertation

by

MICHAEL DANIEL HUTCHINSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: Kinesiology

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Core Values Based Brand Building:
Institutional Stakeholder's Attitudes towards the Texas A&M University Brand.

(August 2010)

Michael Daniel Hutchinson, B.S., Mississippi College;

M.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Gregg Bennett

Research has indicated that positive and negative attitudes toward intercollegiate athletics can contribute to the perceptions of both congruency and incongruency with the established university mission and values. Core values are considered to represent philosophical viewpoints and organizational priorities, further providing a sense of purpose to stakeholders. As such, established core values are expected to be applied and enacted in daily interactions in order to fulfill the mission and vision of an organization. Over time, however, the increase in negative attitudes attributed to athletic department behavior brings into question their perceived alignment with the university core values and brand. The potential existence of incompatibility and misalignment among internal constituents concerning core values has been linked to the starting point for conflicts within the organizational setting. Thus, attitudes toward athletic department behavioral congruency or incongruency with stated university core values is worthy of investigation in order to determine the consequential impact on the university brand. The purpose of

this study was to investigate stakeholder attitudes toward athletic department behavioral congruency with the stated core values of Texas A&M University and assess the subsequent implications for the university brand.

Personal interviews (N=13) were conducted with individuals from each of six university internal and external stakeholder groups: current students, alumni, faculty/staff members, community members, athletic department personnel, and athletic department boosters. Findings revealed four primary themes: 1) 'Excellence' Equals Winning, 2) For Public Relations Purposes Only, 3) Separation and Isolation of the Athletic Department, and 4) Lack of Leadership from the Top-Down. Implications communicated the necessity of a consistent and accurate representation of the Texas A&M brand at all university levels. Further, the implementation of a unique, potentially more effective model for core value congruency and brand management was presented. Finally, the necessity of promotion and implementation of the core values from university and athletic department leadership was recommended for core value effectiveness and brand consistency.

DEDICATION

To my Family, who guides, supports, and loves me

&

To Jesus Christ, for He is the gospel

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16 (ESV)

I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen. This is a true saying: if we die with him, we will also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

II Timothy 2:10-13 (NLT)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Brand Distinction in Higher Education

Marketing within most university settings has traditionally been an imprecise reaction to the unfamiliar economical forces facing the higher education environment (Shoemaker & Muston, 1998). However, with the roughly 4,000 higher education institutions in the United States, competition has forced colleges and universities nationwide to explore alternative forms of differentiation (Chapleo, 2006; Judson et al., 2009; Kotler & Kotler, 1998). Although several variables impact university choice among prospective students (e.g., geographic location, tuition cost, and prestige), it seems dubious to believe that university officials can distinguish their respective institution by traditional forms of word of mouth marketing (Carey, 1989). Prior to the 1980's, marketing concepts and procedures were virtually unheard of within the higher education environment (Toma, Dubrow, & Harley, 2005). Yet, the increasingly competitive market for the best and the brightest students has led once naive university administrators to implement integrated marketing communications strategies and practices (Wasmer, Williams, & Stevenson, 1997; Zemsky, Shaman, & Shapiro, 2001).

Within the university setting, branding strategies are designed to create and develop meaningful differences among stakeholder attitudes and perceptions (Aaker, 1991; Clark et al., 2009). Increasingly, universities are recognizing that prospective students base their college choice on the brand of an institution over any other variable (Judson,

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Sport Management*.

Gorchels, & Aurand, 2006). Over the years, marketing scholars outside the university environment have acknowledged the influences of brand image on consumers' beliefs (Beckwith & Lehman, 1975). However, research has confirmed that this concept is also prevalent within university branding initiatives as well (Judson, et al., 2006). For instance, Fickes (2003) cites the results of a survey that revealed Princeton University Law School as one of the top 10 law schools in the nation. Although Princeton has never had a law school, it does communicate the perception of academic excellence associated with the university brand and establishes the powerful influence of the branding phenomenon (Fickes, 2003). As such, universities are making a concerted effort to develop a unique brand identity for their respective institution. Lawlor defined brand identity within the university setting as "the essence of how you would like alumni, prospective students, legislators, and the public to perceive your institution" (1998, p. 19). Thus, it is imperative for university officials to strengthen the positive association of a university's brand in the mind of its stakeholders in an effort to differentiate itself from competitors (Brown, Zuefle, & Batista, 2007; Gladden, Irwin, & Sutton, 2001).

Certainly, most institutions of higher learning desire to brand their respective university on the basis of the academic superiority it provides students. As evidenced above, there are institutions of higher learning that gain increased levels of visibility based strictly upon their academic rigor and reputation. Nevertheless, the number of such institutions is minuscule in comparison to the overall population of universities in the United States. As a result, universities have sought alternate avenues of

differentiation among the highly competitive environment that is higher education. One such avenue is the university athletic department.

Athletics as a Platform for Marketing

According to Roy, Graeff, and Harmon (2008), intercollegiate athletics are “instrumental in shaping institutional image, the image of its students and graduates, and building bonds of community among supporters” (p. 15). Prior to the advent of technology, intercollegiate athletic programs were tailored to the local and regional audience. However, with the expansion of broadcasting mediums, intercollegiate athletics have progressively transitioned from a regional based activity to a form of national entertainment (Sperber, 2000). In 1992, for example, an investigation of Northwestern University revealed that 70% of university media coverage was related to athletics, while a mere 5% was directed to research and academic initiatives (Goff, 2000). This increased media exposure has drawn attention to the importance of positioning the university brand in the mind of stakeholders and consumers, thus challenging administrators to consider the desired brand image of both the university and the athletic department.

Since the athletic department often serves as the proverbial “front porch” of the university, branding initiatives become an important component for the subsequent image of the overall university (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). However, marketing scholars assert that branding strategies must be aligned and congruent with the university brand mission in order to achieve effectiveness (Chapleo, 2005; Clark et al., 2009). The formation of a brand identity must begin with the establishment and objectification of

the university core values (Moser, 2003). Hence, the creation and development of such branding strategies includes the establishment, articulation, and implementation of core values within university marketing initiatives (Belanger, Syed, & Mount, 2007; Moser, 2003).

Building the Brand on Core Values

As an element of building and maintaining the desired brand image, core values have emerged as fundamental characteristics that define the brand of an organization (Moser, 2003; Urde, 2003). Core values have been described as the guiding principles and beacons for the brand building process (Lencioni, 2002; Urde, 2003). Further, the implementation of core values provides an avenue for differentiation among other industry competitors (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Knox & Maklan, 1998; Urde, 2009). Yet, the establishment of such core values must be met with commitment and consistency, as a failure to do so will disillusion stakeholders, and deplete the credibility and legitimacy of an organization's brand (Collins & Porras, 1996; Ind, 2007; Senge, 1992; Sull & Spinosa, 2007).

As an institution laden with values, the established Texas A&M University brand promise is clear in its purpose: to “model our core values in all that we do” (Texas A&M University Brand Guide). As such, Texas A&M has established six core values in an attempt to display their defining characteristics as an institution of higher learning: Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect, and Selfless Service. Although not exhaustive, the Texas A&M Statement of Core Values provides several stakeholder quotations and brief examples related to each core value in an effort to establish

objectivity and understanding of the university brand (Texas A&M University, 2010). Considered to reside under the core value of ‘Loyalty,’ the traditions of Texas A&M have long permeated the entirety of the university. With an existence of more than 130 years, Texas A&M has long honored age old traditions. These traditions provide Texas A&M stakeholders a sense of community and an avenue for the celebration of the Aggie spirit. Examples of such university wide traditions include Silver Taps (regular memorial service and final tribute held for Aggie students), Muster (annual remembrance service held worldwide for Aggies), the Aggie Ring (symbol of Aggie values and hard work and a visual reminder of being part of the ‘Aggie network’), and the term “Howdy” (greeting to and from Aggies and a warm welcome to the university).

In addition to these university wide traditions, several traditions are specifically targeted to the intercollegiate athletics context. For instance, ‘Maroon Out’ is an athletics based tradition that encourages all fans in attendance to wear maroon apparel in order to display their Aggie pride. ‘Yell Practice’ is a tradition where Aggie fans practice symbolic yells led by student yell leaders before or after an athletic competition. The Texas A&M “12th Man” is represented by Aggie fans standing for athletic events in order to display their support and readiness to help the team (For a complete list and detailed description of Aggie traditions, see Appendix A). Clearly, such behaviors indicate the intended uniform nature and consistent implementation of these core values throughout the entirety of the university.

Statement of the Problem

Realistically, however, intercollegiate athletics has not always been a consistent beacon for promoting and implementing all established or promoted values of a university (Knorr, 2004). As intercollegiate athletics have increased in popularity and media coverage, conflicting viewpoints as to the positive or negative effects imparted to higher education institutions have been raised (e.g., Adler & Adler, 1991; Gerdy, 1997). Although positively referenced as the ‘front porch’ of the university, intercollegiate athletics programs, at its most extreme level, have been characterized as the “antithesis of academic values” (Knorr, 2004, p. 18; Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2001). Perceptions of intercollegiate athletics programs and their behavior vary significantly among university stakeholders, fans, and the general public (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). Although athletics can generate positive qualities such as increased alumni contributions and financially lucrative athletics programs, several behaviors have contributed to negative perceptions, including lack of student athlete academic preparation, low graduation rates, off the field violence, exorbitant coaching salaries, and athletic programs financial dependency upon the university (Putler & Wolfe, 1999).

According to Sevier (2001), such acts of the athletics department can act as a brand usurper in the development and implementation of the overall university branding strategy. As previously established, one goal of university branding is to strengthen the positive association of a university’s brand in the mind of its stakeholders (Brown, Zuefle, & Batista, 2007; Gladden, Irwin, & Sutton, 2001). Since the brand of a university serves as the primary interaction point between stakeholder perceptions and

expectations (De Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998), these attitudes and perceptions have a direct effect on how the university would like stakeholders to view the brand (Johnson, Jubenville, & Goss, 2009; Lawlor, 1998). With particular relevance to this investigation, research has indicated that positive and negative attitudes toward intercollegiate athletics can contribute to the perceptions of both congruency and incongruency with the established university mission and values (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). The potential existence of incompatibility and misalignment among internal constituents concerning core values has been linked to the starting point for conflicts within the organizational setting (Barrett, 2006). As such, attitudes toward athletic department behavioral congruency or incongruency with stated university core values is worthy of investigation in order to determine the consequential impact on the university brand.

Purpose of the Study

There is a paucity of original research investigating stakeholder attitudes of athletic department behavioral alignment with university core values and the subsequent impact on the brand of a university. For purposes of this investigation, a stakeholder has been defined as “persons or groups that have or claim ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future” (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Core values are considered to represent philosophical viewpoints and organizational priorities, further providing a sense of purpose to stakeholders (Anderson, 1997; Begley & Boyd, 2001; Channon, 1992; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Lewis, 1997). As such, established core values are expected to be applied and enacted in daily interactions in order to fulfill the mission and vision of an organization. Over time, however, the increase in negative

attitudes attributed to athletic department behavior brings into question their perceived alignment with stated university core values. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate stakeholder attitudes toward athletic department behavioral congruency with the stated core values of Texas A&M University and assess the subsequent implications for the university brand.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Establishment and Definition of Branding

As a derivation of the original Old Germanic term *brinn-an* (“to burn”), the word ‘brand’ elicits a historical foundation associated with identification and ownership (Stern, 2006). History informs us of the earliest roots of branding, as fifteenth century craftsmen enacted the concept by physically branding a unique, distinguishable mark of ownership on their livestock for purposes of differentiation among fellow owners and suppliers (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998; Stern, 2006). Upon the arrival of the nineteenth century, industrial revolution manufacturers were forced to further brand their products within an ever increasing competitive marketplace. Within this time period, the original physical burn mark of the Middle Ages evolved into the visual-verbal mark, indicating not only a proof of ownership, but also a sign of quality (Stern, 2006). The onset of the twentieth century brought about the rise in technological advancement and business savvy. Although this sequence of events proved to be beneficial for American capitalism, it set about the end of simply distributing a competitive, quality product, and opened the door to more advanced marketing strategies (Kotler, 1997).

This period of history evoked the beginning of several definitions for the now popular marketing concept of branding. Early definitions primarily focused on the tangible aspects of a brand, emphasizing the role it played in aiding customers with the product or service decision making process (Aaker, 1996; Harris, 2009). Aaker (1991) defined a brand as a “distinguishing name and/or symbol... intended to identify the

goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors” (p. 7). Although this definition provided an initial foundation for defining a brand, the advancement of consumer sophistication forced marketers to shift their attentions from the tangible aspects (e.g., name, logo) of branding to the more intangible aspects (e.g., personality, values) of branding (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1998; Stride, 2006). Following Aaker (1991), Ambler and Styles (1996) postulated an expanded definition of a brand, claiming that a brand was a “promise of the bundle of attributes that someone buys... these attributes may be real or illusory, rational or emotional, tangible or invisible” (p. 10). Their definition more appropriately included the intangible and emotional aspects of a brand.

In an effort to more acutely define the branding concept, De Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) introduced the necessary addition of values, defining a brand as “a complex multidimensional construct whereby managers augment products and services with values and this facilitates the process by which consumers confidently recognize and appreciate these values” (p. 427). With particular relevance to this investigation, De Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) state that the “firm’s activities (input) and the consumers’ perceptions (output) emerge as the two main boundaries of the brand construct” (p. 428). Based upon De Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley’s definition, we can deduce that a brand should first begin with the customer in mind and subsequently incorporate some form of values (e.g., Pulley, 2003). Although these definitions provide an initial foundation for understanding this established concept, a

brand may occupy several additional meanings depending upon its situational role, value, and the perspective with which it is viewed (Fan, 2005).

Brands have taken a variety of navigational forms and pathways for the ever diversifying organizational stakeholder (Balmer & Gray, 2003). For instance, brand owners may simply view a brand as a device for differentiation and distinction within a particular product or service category (Kapferer, 1997). Brand users may develop an emotional attachment to a brand, mentally promoting the brand to an iconic status following a self determined level of experience or satisfaction with the brand (Fan, 2005). Within an organizational entity, a brand represents the entire organization, becoming a synonym for company policies, values, and the overall face of the organization (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003; Fan, 2005). Although these meanings vary depending upon the perspective, a brand is designed to create, foster, develop, and maintain relationships between internal and external organizational stakeholders (Fan, 2005). Thus, organizations should attempt to develop emotional ties with stakeholders, as a brand is considered to be a unique occurrence within the consumer mind that satisfies both functional and symbolic needs (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009).

University Branding

Branding literature within the higher education marketing context has primarily focused on the external aspects of branding as opposed to in-depth investigations and case studies into specific organizations (Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009). Empirical studies relating to university branding include such topics as communication of university brands (Belanger, Mount, & Wilson, 2002; Bulotaite, 2003), branding policies (Baker &

Balmer, 1997; Chapleo, 2004; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007), and international branding (Gray, Fam, & Llanes, 2003). Additional articles within the university branding literature are theoretical in nature, focusing on the emergence of brand identities (Lowrie, 2007), branding advantages and disadvantages (Stensaker, 2007), and the potential for successful brands within the university setting (Chapleo, 2005). Although research on this marketing construct is in its earliest stages (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009), researchers maintain the need for additional investigation into the university branding construct (Melewar & Akel, 2006).

Similar to product manufacturers of the nineteenth century industrial revolution, competition within the higher education sector has driven university officials to embrace the branding concept. In an effort to align with the previously discussed service based mindset towards higher education marketing, universities must determine the initial, overall institutional brand or brand proposition. According to Wæraas and Solbakk (2009), a university must first define its brand essence. This essence consists of clearly and precisely defining who they are by establishing specific values and characteristics, while also consistently exhibiting such values to both internal and external stakeholders (Chapleo, 2005; Clark et al., 2009; Jevons, 2006). University branding initiatives have traditionally based their brand management upon several observable statements such as visual designs, mission statements, vision statements, and core values (Van Riel, 1995; Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009).

Several research investigations have acknowledged the necessity of a few basic ingredients for the development of a brand (Alessandri, 2001; Balmer & Soenen, 1999,

De Chernatony & Dall'Omo Riley, 1998; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; Pringle & Thompson, 1999). Based upon these research investigations, Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) deduced that there were three primary components that must be present in a university brand. These include “a) a collection of promises presented to the outside world concerning the brand’s benefits (brand as “covenant”), b) a set of distinctive features that define the brand’s inherent nature and reality (the brand’s quiddity), and c) an assortment of aesthetic designations and external communications that describe the brand (the brand’s symbolic and external representation)” (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009, p. 87).

The “brand covenant” component was applied by Balmer and Gray (2003) within the corporate setting to exhibit that a brand entails a compilation of promises relating to both the physical and emotional benefits provided to a brand’s buyers. These benefits were typically created around a brand’s set of core values (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Fan, 2005), and should subsequently embody the authentic values and behaviors of the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Within university branding initiatives, however, university marketing communications have been known for commonly making particular promises which simply could not be delivered upon (Gutman & Miaoulis, 2003). Among the traditional promises of a university, such as caliber of instruction, student-friendly administration, social environment, and career prospects (Bennett, 2007; Gatfield, Barker, & Graham, 1999; Gutman & Miaoulis, 2003; Moogan, Baron, & Bainbridge, 2001), organizational mission and vision statements also imply certain types of promises that may or may not be able to be fulfilled (Balmer & Soenen, 1999; De Chernatony,

1999; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). Thus, from a brand effectiveness perspective, it is imperative that universities honor and fulfill stated brand promises.

The second component of a brand refers to the set of distinctive features that define the brand's nature, otherwise known as the "brand quiddity." Derived from the Latin word *quid* ("what"), quiddity is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "inherent nature or essence of a person or thing" (2009). Thus, from a university brand perspective, quiddity refers to the actual reality (as opposed to promised reality) of a brand: what the brand actually is, what the brand actually does, and the actual, functional performance of a brand (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009). This component of a university brand is sometimes considered to be the "organizational identity" of the university (e.g., Balmer, 1998; Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). The university brand quiddity is predominately defined by its foundational core values and the actual behavioral characteristics of its constituents. Certainly, there are additional factors that determine university brand quiddity. Examples include, but are not limited to, student body composition (Bennett & Kottasz, 2006; Van Rekom & Van Riel, 2000), institutional exclusivity or inclusivity (Van Rekom & Van Riel, 2000), research or teaching focus (Gatfield et al., 1999; Ivy, 2001), and the physical nature of the campus (Gray, Fam, & Llanes, 2003; Moogan et al., 2001).

The final component of a university brand is the aesthetic designations and external communications. This symbolic, external representation can include anything from logos, typefaces, and color pallets to stationery, apparel, and transportation vehicles (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1996). These visual aesthetic

designations can represent a university's goals, values, and meaning (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006; Simoes, Dibb, & Fisk, 2005). In addition to aesthetic designations, university marketing communications, such as advertising and public relations, can also communicate with stakeholders and the general public (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009). Additional determinants of an institution's image include, but are not limited to, prior behavior, history, and overall university structure. Regardless of the actual situational reality, these attributes significantly contribute to the perceived image of a university (Simoes et al., 2005). Research has indicated that university image can influence several initiatives, including student recruitment (Palacio, Meneses, & Perez, 2002), external funding sources (Landrum, Turrisi, & Harless, 1998), public perceptions of institutional prestige and quality (McPherson & Schapiro, 1998), and overall university competitiveness (Parameswaran & Glowacka, 1995).

In accordance with Herbig and Milewicz (1997), Van Riel and Balmer (1997), and Fombrun and Rindova (1998), Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) contend that the objective of branding is create and develop a favorable reputation. In this context, reputation is defined as the "estimation of the consistency over time of an attribute of an entity... based on its willingness and ability to perform an activity repeatedly in a similar fashion" (Herbig & Milewicz, 1997, p. 25). According to this line of thinking, reputation is regarded as a consequence, not a cause, of university branding initiatives. As a result of marketing and other communication strategies, reputation is established through the fulfillment of promises over an extended period of time (Herbig & Milewicz, 1997). This reverts back to one of the initial definitions of a brand, specifically relating to the

central nature of its position as a promise (Ambler & Styles, 1996; Belanger et al., 2007; Sevier, 2002). Among such promises, core values have proved to be a key component in defining the brand (and thus the reputation) of an organization or university (Belanger et al., 2002; Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Clark et al., 2009; Harris, 2009; Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009). Fombrun and Rindova (1998) empirically demonstrated that organizations that consistently and systemically projected their core values attained increased reputational rankings as compared with other organizations. In order to further understand the configuration of a brand, additional information regarding core values is needed.

Definition of Core Values

Core values are commonly, and oftentimes incorrectly, labeled as synonymous definitions for the mission and vision of an organization. Whereas the mission statement identifies the initiatives and activities an organization plans to pursue (i.e., why are we here) and the vision statement determines what an organization seeks to achieve (i.e., what do we want to see), core values describe the important concepts and expected behaviors of organizational constituents (i.e., what do we want to stand for) (Berry, 1996; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). These core values, commonly referred to as values, are considered to be the essence of an organization's culture, representing philosophical viewpoints and organizational priorities, while further providing a sense of purpose to employee stakeholders (Anderson, 1997; Begley & Boyd, 2001; Channon, 1992; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008; Lewis, 1997). Such values are expected to be applied and enacted in daily interactions as organizational constituents (i.e., internal stakeholders)

conduct transactions in order to fulfill the mission and vision of the organization. Several definitions of core values have been proposed within the management literature.

Core values have been traditionally viewed as pragmatic, enduring tenets that are central to an organization and serve as cultural cornerstones (Collins & Porras, 2000; Lencioni, 2002). Researchers such as Rokeach (1973) and Abreu, Macedo, and Camarinha-Matos (2009) succinctly defined core values as shared beliefs concerning a desired behavior or end state. Additionally, Schwartz (1992) expanded and built upon this definition by acknowledging that these desired behaviors must transcend specific situations, further guiding the selection and evaluation of such behavior. Collins and Porras (1996) concur with such core value transcendence, noting that values should undoubtedly remain fixed while the surrounding business environment, strategies, and practices must adapt to the shifting world. Collins and Porras (1996) augment the importance of deeply rooted values, stating that such values “will change seldom, if ever” (p. 67).

According to Pant and Lachman (1998), organizational values are true ‘core values’ when their influence on organizational constituent’s actions supersedes that of other pre-determined or fixed values. Based upon definitions by Lewis (1997) and Harmon (1996), Ferguson and Milliman (2008) defined core values as “a unique set of organizational wide beliefs and ideas that intrinsically influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees to achieve institutional and greater societal goals as well as promote employee attainment of personal aspirations” (p. 441). Their definition was intended to

emphasize the impact that values should have on both organizational employees as well as the organization itself.

In accordance with these management based definitions, Urde (2003) developed a marketing based definition of core values. From a branding perspective, Urde (2003) defined core values as overarching concepts and all-embracing terms that summarize organizational brand identity and serve as guiding principles for the brand building process. Based upon the research of Lencioni (2002), Urde provides marketing implications for the impact of organizational core values on the brand building process, stating the following:

Core values rooted in the value foundation of the organization are beacons in the management of a corporate brand. In contrast, having values that are bland, toothless, or just plain dishonest is far from harmless – they may even be destructive [to the brand] (2003, p. 617).

The process of branding further provides the organization with an avenue for differentiation through the foundation of representative core values (Knox & Maklan, 1998; Balmer & Gray, 2003; Urde, 2009). However, the establishment of such values must be met with commitment and consistency, as a failure to do so will disillusion stakeholders, further depleting the credibility and legitimacy of an organization's brand and internal constituents (Collins & Porras, 1996; Ind, 2007; Senge, 1992; Sull & Spinosa, 2007). For purposes of this investigation, core values will be defined as fixed, overarching beliefs that describe foundational organizational concepts and expected behaviors of organizational constituents.

Implementation of Core Values

According to Harmon (1996), organizational core values can be divided into different categories based on the type of value. For example, as postulated by Ferguson and Milliman (2008), organizations have the tendency to divide core values into such categories as organizational values and psychological values. Organizational level values, such as “customer’s first” or “environmentally friendly products,” communicate the actual process of how employees should conduct their daily work activities or the expected output of the organization. Contrarily, psychological values, such as “service,” “integrity,” and “loyalty,” emphasize the beliefs, convictions, and aspirations an organization expects employees to uphold in all circumstances. These distinctions are necessary in order to maintain balance, accomplish differing purposes, and retain simplicity among the various types of values within an organization (Harmon, 1996).

Within this framework, it is also important for organizations to determine the appropriate number of core values to implement, as well as confirm that employees understand what the core values represent and how to employ them on a daily basis. Intel, for instance, condensed their total number of values from nine to six when they discovered that employees were not able to understand or remember all of the determined organizational values (Harmon, 1996; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). In addition to Intel’s reduction in its total number of values, employees also alluded to a lack of understanding regarding the core values. This prompted Intel to establish more objective and clarifying statements in relation to their values. At the time, Intel had established values such as discipline, quality, risk taking, and customer orientation.

In order to alleviate employee confusion and lack of understanding with their core values, Intel further specified the meaning of each value by inserting ‘guideline statements.’ For example, the core value of risk taking was attributed guideline statements related to embracing change, challenging the status quo, listening to all ideas and viewpoints, encouraging and rewarding informed risk taking, and learning from successes and mistakes. Additional organizations, such as Texas Instruments (TI), have also applied similar tactics, providing further defined guideline statements for optimum employee understanding of their core values (Harmon, 1996; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). For example, TI’s core value of integrity has identified guideline statements such as “respecting others” and “honesty.” The guideline statement of “respecting others” was further defined by emphasizing principles as “recognizing and avoiding behavior that others may find offensive, respect privacy, and recognizing that conduct acceptable in one culture may be viewed differently in another” (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008, p. 441).

Implementation of Core Values in the Sport Industry

The nature, role, and function of core values are considered a fundamental component in the development of an organization’s foundational belief structure (Urde, 2003). Subsequently, core values are vital for continuity, consistency, and credibility in the process of building and maintaining the desired brand of an organization. Within the sport setting, however, the implementation of core values appears to be lagging behind that of the broader corporate environment. The sport industry and environment exhibits the perception of a progressively decreasing emphasis regarding the importance of values and their relationship to identity. This is exhibited by such current issues as performance

enhancing drugs, violence within and outside the sport setting, lack of player-official respect, fan hostility, illegal payments to players/officials, and ‘padding’ and ‘moving’ numbers in organizational financial statements (Putler & Wolfe, 1999; Rugby Football Union, 2009). With the emergence of such issues, several individuals and organizations have begun to combat these issues by incorporating core values within sport industry initiatives.

Designed as a national high school football kickoff event, Tony Dungy’s ‘Red Zone 2009’ movie-event aimed to inspire and motivate high school football athletes to exhibit particular on and off the field behavioral characteristics. Through the collaboration of Fathom Events and Fresh Air Media, this live event was simultaneously fed via satellite to 460 movie theatres nationwide for teams, athletes, and coaches. The event utilized an interview type format for providing tips from such current and former professional athletes and coaches as Peyton Manning, Bob Sanders, Dallas Clark, Joseph Addai, Adam Vinatieri, Michael Irvin, Coach Pete Carroll, and Strength & Conditioning Coach Jon Torine. By asking probing questions, Coach Dungy seeks to provide attendees with the necessary ingredients for good training and the development of character by focusing on four key areas: performance, conditioning, teamwork, and character.

Within the scope of this investigation, the key area of character provides a representative foundation for the emergence and necessity of values in the sport industry. During the Red Zone event, players were challenged to make a personal commitment to the five key areas of character: hard work, attitude, respect, language, and off the field academics. For those players willing to make the commitment, Coach Dungy

encouraged them to wear the 'Dare to be Uncommon' wristband as a visible reminder of their decision. These wristbands also provided athletes an avenue for explaining to fellow peers and the general public of their commitment to character values on and off the field. This event provides an example of one manner in which to objectively incorporate values within the sport setting.

Another example of the implementation of values within the sport industry is exhibited by the Rugby Football Union's Core Value Campaign. In September of 2009, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) launched the 'This is Rugby' campaign in order to promote the core values of the sport. Partnering with the Premier Rugby Limited (PRL) and the Professional Rugby Players Association (PRA), the campaign addressed the changing standards of behavior among athletes and fans. A task group conducted extensive research over a period of two years related to the sport of rugby at all levels and revealed issues ranging from abusive parents at mini-rugby matches and hostility among rugby fans to a lack of athlete respect for officiating crews. Based upon the results, the RFU established five core values to determine what the game stood for and what it should represent in the future. These core values include teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline, and sportsmanship.

Each core value displayed several attributes that clearly objectified the desired intentions and behavior of rugby stakeholders. The core value of respect, for instance, established an objective list of expected behaviors:

Respect: Mutual respect forms the basis of our sport. We hold in high esteem our sport, its values and traditions and earn the respect of others in the way we behave. We respect our match officials and accept their decisions. We respect opposition players and supporters. We value our

coaches and those who run our clubs and treat clubhouses with consideration (Rugby Football Union, 2009).

Similar to respect, the core value of sportsmanship also provides examples of expected behaviors and actions that are deemed acceptable for stakeholders of the sport:

Sportsmanship: Sportsmanship is the foundation upon which rugby union is built. We uphold the rugby tradition of camaraderie with team-mates and opponents. We observe fair play both on and off the pitch and are generous in victory and dignified in defeat. We play to win but not at all costs and recognise both endeavour and achievement. We ensure that the wellbeing and development of individual players is central to all rugby activity (Rugby Football Union, 2009).

These two examples provide evidence of the necessity of core values in the sport industry. Coupled with university branding initiatives, the establishment of core values within the sport setting now affords an appropriate transition into branding and core values within the university context.

Texas A&M University Core Values

As established in the introduction, Texas A&M University has long proclaimed to be a university laden with values. As such, Texas A&M has established six core values in an attempt to display such characteristics: Excellence, Integrity, Leadership, Loyalty, Respect, and Selfless Service. The Texas A&M Statement of Core Values provides several objective examples of implementation and stakeholder quotations related to each listed core value for purposes of clear, consistent understanding (Texas A&M University, 2010). ‘Excellence – Set the bar’ describes the sense of pride Texas A&M stakeholders have in who they are and what they believe in (Former Texas A&M president, Dr. Robert Gates). For example, Texas A&M cites the Vision 2020 Plan as exhibiting excellence at the university. This plan identifies twelve specific areas of

focus, such as increasing diversity among students, enhancing the undergraduate experience, and strengthening graduate programs, that define the university goals of excellence over the next decade.

‘Integrity – Character is destiny’ displays the seriousness of honesty and accountability among Texas A&M stakeholders. This value is exemplified in the Aggie Code of Honor which states that “Aggies do not lie, cheat, or steal nor tolerate those that do.” The Aggie Code of Honor seeks to unify the Texas A&M body and promotes a heightened sense of ethics and personal dignity. This code is symbolic of a commitment to truthfulness and thus confidence in one another. ‘Leadership – Follow me’ represents the early roots of developing leaders of character at the university. Texas A&M cites the Student Government Association (SGA) as an example of leadership. The SGA provides leadership by addressing student opinions, campus needs, and enriching the quality of student life. ‘Loyalty – Acceptance forever’ describes the devotion of Texas A&M stakeholders to one another and the history of the university. For example, the Association of Former Students is considered to display loyalty. At Texas A&M, previous university students are not termed ‘alumni;’ they are referred to as ‘former students.’ Although former students are not physically attending the university, they are considered to remain a crucial part of the university as a whole. This illustrates the sense of oneness and loyalty among previous and current Aggies, as former students are not considered to be completely detached from the university.

‘Respect – We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we’ represents the unconditional honor expressed towards the whole of life. Aggie Muster is considered to be an example of

respect at Texas A&M. Muster is an annual event that allows Aggies the opportunity to reflect upon the lives of those who passed away throughout the year. Muster takes place around the entire world among current and former students, and is considered to be the ‘lasting impression every Aggie leaves’ (Texas A&M University, 2010). Finally, ‘Selfless Service – How can I be of service’ displays their commitment to self-sacrificing generosity in the university, community, nation, and world. The Big Event, for example, is the largest, one-day, student-run service project in the country. Students complete service projects, such as yard work, window washing, and painting, in an effort to display their thankfulness to the residents of the Bryan-College Station community. The complete list and university description of the core values is attached in Appendix B. Clearly, Texas A&M University has set out to establish itself as a value laden institution. However, within the university setting, such values are not necessarily encouraged and implemented in all branches of higher education institutions.

Perceptions of Intercollegiate Athletics

With the inception of the NCAA in 1906, intercollegiate athletics have been a visible aspect of higher education for more than a century (NCAA, 2009). Referred to as the “front porch” of a university, the athletic department has become one of the largest and most visible operating units on a collegiate campus (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). However, attitudes towards intercollegiate athletics vary significantly among university stakeholders, fans, and the general public. The growing popularity and increasing media coverage of intercollegiate athletics has produced conflicting viewpoints as to the positive or negative effects imparted to higher education institutions (e.g., Adler &

Adler, 1991; Gerdy, 1997). According to Putler and Wolfe (1999), there are several explanations for both positive and negative perceptions of intercollegiate athletics. The following aspects contribute to the positive perceptions of intercollegiate athletics programs: student athletes who graduate and positively represent the university, athletics programs aid in increasing alumni contributions (thus increasing university attractiveness and the potential for additional state funding), athletic programs commitment and progress in establishing gender equity and racial integration, and financially lucrative athletics programs.

Prior research indicates that athletic programs positively benefit the university in an assortment of ways (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Goff, 2000; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Murphy & Trandel, 1994; Toma & Cross, 1998; Tucker & Amato, 1993). As evidenced by previous research, athletics as a “free” marketing tool increases visibility and awareness of the university, as well as draws a diverse pool of potential students (Hughes & Shank, 2008). According to Murphy and Trandel (1994), a 25% increase in the university football team’s record will subsequently increase the number of university applicants by 1.3%. Further, research has proven that following a high-profile sports team’s (e.g., football, men’s basketball) national championship attainment, the number of university applicants has increased considerably throughout the succeeding three years (Toma & Cross, 1998).

Additionally, research has revealed a positive impact between athletic team success (i.e., winning athletic contests) and increased university donations (Hughes & Shank, 2008). Grimes and Chressanthis (1994) conducted a study that revealed for every 1%

increase in the combined winning percentage of basketball, baseball, and football, academic related donations to the university increased by \$286,700. In their examination of 167 institutions' alumni contributions from 1973 to 1990, Baade and Sundberg (1996) discovered that football bowl appearances increased alumni contributions anywhere from 40% to 54%.

Finally, for university athletic departments that earn a profit, revenue generating sports (e.g., football, men's basketball) can positively impact the athletics department and university by providing a financial avenue for supporting non-revenue generating sports through ticket sales and media packages (Fulks, 2002). As evidenced by such examples, there are great benefits that an athletic department can bring to a university if conducted in a proper and successful manner. However, these positive attributes do not solely define the behavior and perceptions of university athletic departments.

Contrarily, factors contributing to the negative perceptions of intercollegiate athletics include the following: lack of student athlete academic preparation, low graduation rates, off the field violence, illegal financial payments to student athletes, lack of gender and racial equity, exorbitant coaching salaries, and athletic programs financial dependency upon the university. According to Sylwester and Witosky (2004), athletic department spending is increasing at an annual rate of 25% as compared to 10% by the university. Further, Hughes and Shank (2008) contend that scandals and unethical behavior within athletic departments have a drastic impact on the ability of universities to accomplish goals and objectives. For instance, Southern Methodist University (SMU) has achieved two national championships (1935, 1982), produced countless All-Americans, and held

the most wins among all Division I football programs from 1980-1985. However, this era was effectively ended after an NCAA mandated investigation concerning illegal monetary payments to SMU players. Although the football program was reinstated in the 1989 season, the athletic department has yet to come even somewhat close to rivaling the success of the 1980's era. More importantly, the athletic department and university are still subject to potential negative perceptions associated with an era that is nearly three decades in the past.

Particularly relevant to this investigation, Putler and Wolfe (1999) state that these factors can contribute to the perceptions of both consistency and inconsistency with the established university mission and values, thus impacting the university brand. Although each of these individual issues have been researched to some degree within the extant literature, comprehensive research specifically investigating the impact of athletic department core value congruency and the subsequent impact on the university brand has yet to be explored.

Conclusion of the Review of Literature

As demonstrated within this review of literature, the alignment and implementation of core values have an impact on the brand of a university. Such congruency must be consistent throughout all branches of an organizational entity. For purposes of this study, the university athletic department will be used to investigate attitudes of such congruency or incongruency, as well as provide implications for insulation of the brand. In order to more thoroughly investigate stakeholder attitudes, the following research questions were developed:

R1: What are stakeholder attitudes toward Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M University Athletics Department?

R2: What are stakeholder's attitudes towards the behavioral congruency of the athletic department with the stated core values of the university?

R3: What are the subsequent implications for the Texas A&M University brand?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Due to the exploratory nature of this investigation, the qualitative methodology was well-suited for addressing the primary research questions and uncovering the impact of stakeholder attitudes towards the university brand. In order to do so, this investigation implemented two primary qualitative data gathering techniques: personal interviews and document analysis.

Qualitative Interviewing

Over the years, qualitative research has continued to grow in diversity of methods used (Patton, 1999), as well as amount of credibility earned (Biddle et al., 2001; Patton, 1999). Kaplan and Maxwell (2005) defined the goal of qualitative research as “understanding issues or particular situations by investigating the perspectives and behavior of the people in these situations and the context within which they act” (2005, p. 30). Lincoln (1992) divided qualitative research into two categories: human-to-human methods and artifactual methods. The human-to-human methods include “interviewing, participant and non-participant observation, and nonverbal communication,” (1992, p. 376) while artifactual methods involve “the use of documents – such as letters, memoranda, project descriptions, evaluation reports, diaries, descriptions of curricula, and the like – records, and unobtrusive measures” (1992, p. 376).

For purposes of this investigation, human-to-human interviewing was the primary method conducted in order to fully utilize the flexibility of the interviewing process. Qualitative interviewing allows researchers to better evaluate interviewee experiences,

while additionally allowing them to restate events that have occurred throughout their lifetime (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This method has been effectively applied in previous capacities within the sport management setting (e.g., Kram & Isabella, 1985; Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998).

Document Analysis

Document analysis was also conducted on several artifacts, primarily focusing on the Texas A&M University Statement of Core Values, the Texas A&M University Athletics Mission Statement, and the Texas A&M University Vision 2020 document. Although sometimes disregarded as sources of information, documents and records are useful sources of information, specifically with initial research investigations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Document analysis involves the examination of available and stable documents and/or records for the purpose of corroborating other implemented research methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Documents and records are especially useful as reputable sources of information, as they represent a nonreactive form of interaction (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Obviously, the Texas A&M University Statement of Core Values and separate Texas A&M University Athletics Department Mission Statement were necessary foundations for this investigation. Both the university core values and athletics department mission statement were obtained from the university and athletics department websites. These documents were subsequently used throughout the data collection and analysis processes as a reference for interviewees, and also to inform the results and implications section. The Texas A&M University Vision 2020 is a document that states the future goals and

objectives that are planned to be accomplished and implemented by the year 2020. This document was also used as a reference by several interviewees (notably athletic department personnel), noting its relationship between the university and the athletics department. These artifactual documents were necessary to include within the scope of this investigation for purposes of providing a solid foundation for the official mission and core values statements of Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M University Athletics Department (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Setting

With a rich history in the importance placed upon core values, Texas A&M University was an ideal setting for this investigation. As of the Fall 2009 semester, Texas A&M University was the seventh largest university in the United States with a total student number of 48,702. This student body is comprised of 80.1% undergraduate students, 12.5% master's students, and 7.4% doctoral students. Although the student body represents all 50 of the United States and 130 foreign countries, 86% of the student population is Texas residents. Of these students, 46.8% are female and 53.2% are men. As one of the largest Division I-A institutions in the country, the university houses ten academic colleges and ranks in the top 20 for funding among American research institutes. The university's emphasis on traditions and core values were previously described in the introduction and review of literature. For a complete list of both the Texas A&M traditions and core values, please see Appendices A and F.

As of 1997, the Texas A&M University Athletic Department became a member of the Big 12 Conference. With the school's 20 athletics teams, the 'Aggies' have earned

130 conference and tournament titles (inclusive of the Southwest and Big 12 Conferences) and 8 national championships. Although there has been recent success at the national level with such non-revenue sports teams as track & field, golf, soccer, and equestrian, the university's 'cash cow' sport of football has experienced lackluster performance over the last decade. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, the football team experienced great on the field victories with a consistent nationally ranked football team. However, these victories have diminished over the last decade. Within this period, athletic department compliance with NCAA regulations has presented an ambiguous perception of commitment to the stated core values of the university (e.g., "V.I.P. Connections" e-mails).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was implemented for interviewee selection. This form of sampling was necessary in order to intensively investigate and learn about the phenomena from different perspectives, while also meeting obligatory criterion (e.g., current student, alumni, community resident) associated with being a Texas A&M University stakeholder (Patton, 1990; Stake, 2000). Both internal and external stakeholder groups of Texas A&M University were asked to participate in this study. For purposes of this investigation, a stakeholder has been defined as "persons or groups that have or claim ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future" (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Six stakeholder groups were identified for this investigation, including 1) current students, 2) alumni, 3) faculty/staff members, 4) community members, 5) athletic department personnel, and 6) athletic department

boosters. These stakeholder groups were chosen in an effort to access individuals who have an understanding of the stated university core values, while also providing a wide array of diverse perspectives and experiences. Two individuals from each stakeholder group were selected to participate in this study, with three individuals participating from the athletic department booster stakeholder group. Potential participants were identified as a result of several discussions with Sport Management professors and university officials (e.g., Chief Marketing Officer) currently involved within the principal investigator's academic program and university.

The resulting sample consisted of thirteen individuals (N=13) who were active stakeholders of the university. Participants in the study consisted of five females and eight males. Eleven of the participants were Caucasian and two participants were Hispanic. Participant ages ranged from 22 to 70, with the average age being 48.15 (SD=17.51). Complete demographic information on each interview participant is attached in Appendix C. Interview participants were e-mailed an information sheet (Appendix D), informed consent (Appendix E), and a copy of the semi-structured interview questions (Appendix F). The information sheet explained the purpose and procedure of the study, while the interview question set provided potential participants the opportunity to become familiar with the types of questions to be asked.

Prior to each interview, the principal researcher provided ample time for interviewees to ask any final questions regarding the nature and processes involved with the study. Subsequently, interviewees agreed to the information sheet and signed the university required informed consent. None of the individuals contacted to participate in

the investigation declined to be interviewed or sign the informed consent. Interviews were conducted face-to-face within an office or household setting, dependent upon the preference and availability of the interviewee. As explained in the information sheet, agreement to participate in this study included participants' agreement for the conversation to be audio-taped and used as data. Throughout the collection and analysis stages, participants' names were substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of their responses and individual identity. Participant pseudonyms were chosen by the principal researcher.

Question Development

Thirteen primary interview questions were developed, with numerous supporting questions for each of the primary questions. These questions were created following an extensive review of the existing literature and using the established research questions as a framework and guide. The initial question set was the result of several discussions with individuals within the Sport Management discipline and knowledgeable individuals of the qualitative methodology. Although the initial questions remained throughout all interviews, additional questions were added as interviewees provided different perspectives and ideas following extensive probing within each interview. This process of adding to and adjusting the existing question set throughout the interview process is well within the nature of qualitative examination (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The final interview question set related to the university and their subsequent core values, perceptions of value congruency among the academic and athletic branches of the university, and the resulting impact on the university brand. The interview question

set began with two open-ended ‘grand tour’ questions related to the past experiences of interviewees. Introductory ‘grand tour’ questions allow the researcher to better understand interviewee experiences, while further allowing the interviewee an initial opportunity to set the tone for the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Examples of subsequent interview questions include “Which core values do TAMU athletics represent in their actions? How so? Provide examples,” “Which core values do TAMU athletics not represent in their actions? How so? Provide examples,” and “If the athletic department behaviors are not consistent with the TAMU core values, why do you think these qualities/values are not carried over to the athletics department? Explain.” The implementation of open-ended questions with supporting questions allowed the principal researcher the opportunity to probe interviewee responses by posing more specific questions which resulted in additional clarification regarding a particular topic (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). This method also allowed participants the opportunity to provide additional information concerning valuable knowledge related to the impact of core value congruency on the university brand. A copy of the final interview question set is attached in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Interview times ranged from thirty minutes to an hour and a half, depending upon the detail provided by participants. Data were collected via face-to-face interviews. Although interviews followed a semi-structured format, the nature of each interaction typically leaned more toward a style consistent of an informal conversation. Occasionally, discussion topics included areas which fell outside the scope of the

primary interview questions. However, these effects were reduced by following the pre-defined set of primary and supporting questions which allowed the interviewer to redirect as required. In order to facilitate analysis of the collected data, each interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim following the completion of each interview.

Graduate students were recruited from a Sport Management research methods course in order to help facilitate the interview transcription process. Students transcribed nine of the thirteen interviews in order to allow the principal researcher to focus on the data analysis process. The remaining four interviews were transcribed by the principal researcher. Following each transcription, the principal researcher reviewed each interview recording with the corresponding transcription. This additional measure was conducted in order to ensure a verbatim transcription, as well as guarantee the correct grammatical wording and emphasis of interviewee responses.

Data Organization and Analysis

The implementation of content analysis was applied in an effort to ensure a thorough and accurate representation of the analysis process. According to Patton (2002), the application of content analysis effectively removes any foregone conclusions and presumptions of the phenomena in question “to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions” (p. 485). Content analysis simplifies and organizes the data into components of meaning in an effort to uncover underlying tendencies among study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Within the content analysis process, open, axial, and selective coding were applied to dissect each interview transcription in an effort to discover common thematic emergences and dissimilarities

among the data (Creswell, 1998; Neuman, 2006). Schwandt (2001) identifies coding as “a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (p. 26).

Prior to the initial coding of the data, transcriptions were read thoroughly in order to become familiar with interviewees responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Following this preliminary organization technique, the analysis began by dissecting the data into ‘units’ of information. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a unit is a small piece of information that can stand alone and remain intelligible. Such units can be as short as a few descriptive words or as long as a full paragraph. However, each unit must be the smallest piece of information about something that can stand on its own (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Open coding occurred throughout the initial examination of the data. The units derived from interview transcriptions were printed onto note cards for distribution into preliminary codes. This process provided an initial assessment of the ideas offered by participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These initial codes were subsequently organized, linked, and condensed into broader, more encompassing thematic categories (Neuman, 2006). This stage of the analysis, known as axial coding, allowed the researcher to make sense of the data by searching for categories or themes that could be clustered together. These themes were subsequently used to frame and organize the results and provide insight into the implications of the findings.

Finally, selective coding was implemented following the completion of data collection. Specific data (i.e., quotations) from the interview transcriptions were used to best support the themes that emerged from the data (Creswell, 1998). Sampling was

considered complete once no new thematic trends emerged from the interview data. At this point, sampling was assumed to reach a data saturation point. Depending upon the scope of the investigation, this saturation point or exhaustion within the data informs researchers that additional interviews may or may not prove beneficial (Singer, 2009).

Trustworthiness of the Study

The purpose and function of trustworthiness within the qualitative methodology is to support the significance of the study's findings and establish that the findings are "worth paying attention to" and "worth taking account of" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.290). In a qualitative research investigation, trustworthiness is categorized into four techniques: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The relevance and implementation of each technique will be further explained in detail.

Credibility

Data credibility represents one technique that establishes trustworthiness within a qualitative research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lather, 1986). In order to address credibility, the techniques of triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking were employed.

Triangulation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), triangulation involves the use of "multiple and different methods, investigators, sources, and [or] theories" to obtain corroborating evidence (p. 305). This technique aids in the reduction of chance association and biases, providing increased confidence in the results of an investigation (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Thus, as previously discussed, personal interviews and the

examination of physical artifacts (document analysis) were data collection methods applied in this study to fulfill triangulation.

The credibility of the methods employed was enhanced by audio taping and transcription of personal interviews. Audio-taping provides a unique opportunity to capture the environment and spirit of the interaction between the researcher and the participant. It also allows the researcher to periodically revisit the discussion to confirm perceptions and themes within the spirit of the interview. For consistency purposes, it is useful to combine audio-taping with transcription. Therefore, following each interview, audio tapes were transcribed verbatim into document form and compared to the audio records to ensure accuracy. Each of these data collection methods and credibility techniques were then used to support and corroborate research findings.

Peer Debriefing. The second credibility technique that was utilized for this study involved the use of a peer debriefer for ensuring an accurate and representative interpretation of the data. Peer debriefing provides the researcher an unbiased perspective throughout the research process, particularly providing insight on such aspects as methodological implementation and perception of results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Individuals within the academic program of the researcher were used to discuss emerging issues and themes, as well as to provide insights related to interviewing techniques and documentation. Peer debriefers included fellow colleagues within the researcher's academic institution who were well versed in the qualitative methodology. Additionally, two third party individuals were employed to discuss and revalidate emerging themes and results.

Member Checking. The final technique used for credibility purposes was the implementation of member checking. The member checking process allows interviewees to verify their own responses and confirm the interpretations of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 1998). Thus, member checks with each participant were conducted throughout the course of the study to ensure accuracy, clarify statements, and explore any additional meanings behind participant statements. Each interview participant was e-mailed a copy of their interview transcript for review. No participants indicated any incorrect statements or need for adjustment. In addition to making any necessary adjustments to the transcriptions, this technique also allowed for any additional thoughts or comments formerly overlooked to be added to the interview. This was exhibited by one interviewee who provided additional clarification concerning a particular topic because he/she did not feel that it was thoroughly covered in the actual interview.

Transferability

According to Patton (1990), the qualitative research technique of transferability is analogous with the quantitative measure of generalizability. Data transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of an investigation can be applied to other cases or situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the qualitative methodology does not aim to generalize its findings from one particular case or setting to an entire population, it does provide readers with defined characteristics of the research setting in order to determine the applicability with other populations or situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One manner in which this trustworthiness technique can be accomplished is through

thick, rich description of the research setting. As provided in the introduction and review of literature sections, rich descriptions of the Texas A&M University core values and their implementation of such values was thoroughly described. These descriptions provide future researchers a snapshot of the setting in which the research was conducted and provides them the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments in their own research investigations.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are the two final forms of trustworthiness for a qualitative investigation. Similar to the credibility technique of peer debriefing, dependability and confirmability require the use of an independent third party auditor who is familiar with the qualitative research methodology. A fellow colleague within the researcher's academic institution who was well versed in the qualitative methodology was used as the third party auditor for this study. Upon completion of the investigation, this auditor reviewed and examined the entire research process, beginning with the methodology and concluding with the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). This audit included the examination of data collection processes (e.g., audio tapes, transcriptions), data analysis (e.g., coding), results (e.g., emerging themes), and trustworthiness of the study (e.g., comments from member checking). These techniques aided in the establishment of dependability and confirmability for the entirety of this research investigation.

Ethics and Human Subject Approval

When conducting research involving human subjects, two guidelines are encouraged to be adhered to: 1) voluntary participation of the research participants and 2) benefits gained outweighing exposed risks to participants (Bogdan & Bilken, 1992). Prior to the outset of this investigation, Human Subjects approval was gained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Texas A&M University. As previously mentioned, participants were e-mailed an information sheet and informed consent which confirmed the university's approval of this study, while further providing participants IRB contact information in the case of inappropriate ethical behavior of the part of the researcher. Additional information concerning the IRB approval process can be found at the Institutional Review Board Office via the Texas A&M University website.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question #1

The initial research question called for a comparison of attitudes exhibited by stakeholders toward Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M University athletic department. Stakeholders were asked to provide as many terms as necessary in order to describe the characteristics or behavior of both the university and athletic department on an individual basis. This was done in order to develop a foundation for preliminary understanding of stakeholder attitudes toward the university and the athletic department. Although this investigation did not attempt to segregate these terms and their relative impact, it was deemed necessary to acknowledge the similarities and differences provided by stakeholders. A complete list of terms provided by stakeholders can be viewed in Table 2 (Appendix H).

Initial Indication of Brand Image Differences

Stakeholders noted many of the same terms to describe both the university and athletic department in discussions and dialogues. Among these terms, stakeholders recited the university core values as terms which characterized both the university and the athletic department. However, stakeholders attributed core value terminology to describe the university more often than the athletic department. For instance, the terms ‘Integrity’ and ‘Loyalty’ (which are university core values) were mentioned on six occasions and five occasions to describe the university, but only two occasions and one occasion to describe the athletic department.

Moreover, stakeholders identified several differences in terminology between the university and athletic department. While Table 2 demonstrates similar characteristics between the university and athletic department, it also identifies the fact that there are numerous differences. While difficult to collectively characterize individual terms, there appears to be an introductory thematic emergence among stakeholder responses concerning significantly different attitudes. There were several terms attributed to the athletic department which may be grouped into a single category that did not reflect the identified terms of the university. For example, stakeholders listed such terms as ‘Insular,’ ‘Corrupt,’ ‘Money-focused,’ ‘Isolated,’ ‘Publicity,’ and ‘[Ulterior] Motives’ to describe the athletic department, whereas terms such as ‘Family,’ ‘Culture,’ ‘Naivety,’ ‘Independence,’ ‘Honesty,’ and ‘Entrepreneurial Spirit’ were noted to describe the university.

Initial stakeholder perspectives reflect differences between the attitudes toward the university and the athletic department. Broadly, this indicates the potential for a lack of core value congruency between the university and the athletic department. The application of this initial measure provided the researcher an opportunity to further probe stakeholder attitudes concerning athletic department congruency with the stated core values of the university.

Research Question #2

Data collected revealed four main themes regarding stakeholder’s attitudes towards the behavioral congruency of the athletic department with the stated core values of the university. These four themes included the following: 1) ‘Excellence’ Equals Winning,

2) For Public Relations Purposes Only, 3) Separation and Isolation of the Athletic Department, and 4) Lack of Leadership from the Top-Down.

‘Excellence’ Equals Winning

One of the central themes gathered from participants was the relationship between the athletic department and winning athletic contests. Of the core values identified by Texas A&M University, ‘Excellence’ was the only value that earned consensus agreement among stakeholders as being exhibited by the athletic department’s behavior. According to the Texas A&M University Statement of Core Values, ‘Excellence’ is associated with several general quotations from university stakeholders and campus wide examples referencing purported excellence at the university. Examples of such quotations include the following: “Excellence stems from a great sense of pride in who we are and what we believe in” (Former University president) and “We could do just about anything if we tried hard enough” (Former University student). The core value of ‘Excellence’ is also attributed examples of such excellence, including initiatives involving the university (e.g., Vision 2020 Plan), teaching (e.g., Center for Teaching Excellence), research (e.g., University Research), and students (e.g., University Honors Program).

Yet, contrary to these statements, stakeholders indicated that ‘Excellence’ within the athletic department was primarily defined by and fulfilled through winning athletic contests. When asked what core values were implemented or displayed in the behavior of the athletic department, Carlos, a university faculty member, simply stated “None... none, other than winning.” When asked to further expand upon his thoughts regarding

the relationship between winning and the implementation of core values in the athletic department, Carlos continued by stating the following:

The discussions I have had with former athletes and the people working at the athletics department, what they will say is, “Well, in the process of ‘Building Champions,’ we instill respect and selflessness and the idea of working together and so forth and so on.” No you don’t. If those don’t contribute to you winning, they are not going to be part of what you do. It is about winning and whatever we need to do to win is our priority, and I think by removing themselves so much from the core values of say the university, or at least what a university is supposed to be about, they are able to do whatever the hell they want, as long as they are winning.

Jacob, an executive university staff member, echoed similar sentiments regarding the athletic department and winning:

Yeah, I think absolutely winning – that’s the end goal, is winning. The means to the end are entirely up to the individuals and the coaches. There’s not a right way or a wrong way to win.

Athletic department personnel further emphasized the importance of winning, thus leaving no doubt in the determination of their overall purpose in fulfilling the core value of ‘Excellence.’ Amy and David, executive staff members in the athletic department, established that the core value of ‘Excellence’ is most displayed and exhibited in the form of winning athletic contests:

But the quality of student-athletes that Texas A&M has at this point in time are extremely competitive and they have that strong, strong desire to win. And I think to be successful, you go back to the ‘Excellence.’ (Amy)

‘Building Champions,’ to me, is a little trite. It does put right out there what we’re all about, and that’s winning... And so I don’t know if that term really does it’s service as far as the personal development side of it or the academic achievement side of it, but ‘Building Champions’ elevates it to that we’re striving to a level of eliteness and success, whether it be winning the Big 12, winning a National Championship, which is something we strive to do, but also that we’re giving our student athletes

every opportunity to graduate and that they do graduate and they go on to meaningful jobs, so they are becoming a 'Champion.' (David)

Although there was a brief acknowledgement among athletic department personnel regarding the importance of academic and personal student-athlete development, there was indisputable evidence from the athletic department administration regarding the emphasis and importance placed upon the expectation of winning. Amy provided a fitting quote that best summarizes administrative expectations of coaches and student-athletes:

It's been fun to see how the different coaches have responded to the pressure to win because we have a lot of it now with [Athletics Director]. Innately, there's a pressure of "You've got to win or you're going to get fired." It's very public. It's very open. We talk about it often in all our staff meetings. What can we do, we are all here to help you win. What can we do to help.

Although stakeholders determined winning athletic contests as the athletic department's fulfillment of 'Excellence,' athletic department boosters provided a slightly different perspective on the implementation of 'Excellence.' As a long time donor and supporter of the athletic department, Crystal acknowledged the importance of winning. However, her perspective emphasized the academic, athletic, and personal development of the whole individual student-athlete, as opposed to sole athletic development:

I think winning is important to A&M because I think it indicates 'Excellence.' But, I think it means winning the right way: not cheating, lying, not stealing, but you have to work hard, which I think are qualities that are applied in life... In my opinion, if you don't develop the kids along the way and if you don't do it in the 'right way,' even though you might have a winning team, I think you fail. That might be against what a lot of people think. They think you have to win at all costs. I don't think that.

In accordance with Crystal's comments, Bob also stressed the importance of personal and academic development throughout a student-athlete's collegiate years. Bob, an athletic department booster, specifically addressed the "bigger picture" for student-athletes, while noting a stark contrast from athletic department administrative behavior:

I was just going to say winning aspect is really... not that it's not important to the coaches and the athletes themselves, but I believe they also see the bigger picture of other things they should strive for. Whereas the administration might not... that's a perception that we're talking about, that we have, that's where their myopic view is. 'Excellence' to them means winning, and there's nothing else important, other than that. I think they've lost something in the translation of 'Excellence,' when they look at it that way.

Although both Crystal and Bob placed increased emphasis on student-athlete development as the most important fulfillment of 'Excellence,' they still confirm the previous findings from stakeholders regarding the athletic department's emphasis on winning. These viewpoints provided a clear indication of both internal and external stakeholder's viewpoints of the tremendous importance placed upon winning by the athletic department administration.

All About the Money, Not About the Change. In addition to the emphasis placed upon winning, university stakeholders further acknowledged the relationship between winning and revenue generation. When asked to indicate any core values displayed by the athletic department, Neal, a vested community member and university alumni, simply responded with "Make money, but that's not a value of the university." This viewpoint was further expanded upon by Lauren, a current student and athletic department tutor at the university. She stated the following concerning the athletic department's implementation of the core value of 'Excellence:'

Sometimes, I think it's just about winning and how much revenue the sport can generate, where it should be about more – like respect for others or loyalty to the university, integrity, not cheating in the classroom, or on the playing field... As far as winning, we all know winning generates revenue, and so, therefore, I think the athletic administration's focus is money and revenue generation, and winning will provide this... They stress winning, the coaches stress winning, the players want to win, then they'll make money.

As a form of corroborative evidence, Caleb, an alumni and former athletic department booster, provided further confirmation of 'Excellence' representing winning and the generation of revenue:

I think that some people probably view the athletic department and the administration of the athletic department with a little bit of disdain at times because they see them saying one thing, but they know there's a motive behind that. And that's to get people to buy tickets and that's really to get people to give donations, so that they can build more facilities, so that they can win.

Certainly, Caleb is not the only university stakeholder with such a viewpoint of the athletic department's behavior, nor would all stakeholders agree with his perspective. However, he continued by providing a personal example from his former years of monetarily supporting the athletic department:

I think back to 2002 and 2003 when we had season tickets to football... and we had the worst season in maybe 30 years, or something like that. And going into the next year after that, terrible, terrible season, where we went 4-8, the ticket prices went up dramatically. And we had to hear from the athletic department, athletic director [Name of the Athletic Director], that this is the cost of 'Building Champions,' the battle cry of the department, that you're going to have to pony up the money if you want the program to get good... But it was kind of a bitter pill to swallow in a way to hear someone say, on the heels of the worst football season, the first losing season in many years, and on the heels of the worst football season in 30 years, that we're going to raise your prices significantly and you need to pay more to be able to have the privilege of going to this.

Contrary to the previous stakeholder viewpoints, one external stakeholder provided a different response to the athletic department's monetary spending patterns. Josh, a long time community member, offered a different perspective on athletic department spending:

Well, honestly, I have seen for me as a resident of this community and this is just me and I'm not an Aggie, but I am actually pleased with what has happened. I know there is a lot of rift around how much money [Athletic Director] spends, but look what he has done. He's won... championships.

While his perspective stands alone amidst other interviewee responses, it still confirms the perceived relationship between money and winning. Josh neglected to answer how such behavior represents the core values of the university, further alluding to the lack of emphasis placed upon core value implementation at the administrative level.

For Public Relations Purposes Only

Beyond the core value of 'Excellence,' stakeholders indicated a lack of consensus agreement as to the athletic department's behavioral congruency with the stated university core values. As an involved alumni and respected executive staff member of the university, Jacob provided a representative introductory statement regarding his viewpoints on the athletic department's overall implementation of the university values:

Certainly, they would agree with and they try to embody 'Excellence.' I mean there's no question about that. I mean, the 'Building Champions' mantra they have is very much about 'Excellence' and athletic performance, so those two things would be shared, there's no question about that. I don't think there would be much debate on that. I think when you get past that, there is a real disconnect.

This statement facilitates a transition into stakeholders concerns regarding the purported implementation of core values within the athletic department. Although some

stakeholders provided isolated incidences of coaches and student-athletes exhibiting university core values in their actions, many indicated the possibility of any attempted implementation by the athletic department administration for the sole purpose of positive public relations. Having previously worked in a high-profile Division I-A athletics program, Carlos understands the interworkings of athletic department decision-making. With experience in both athletics and academia, his reaction to such initiatives was clear. In response to the athletic department's implementation of the university core value of 'Selfless Service,' he simply responded with "Service... 'Selfless Service?'" No... '*Selfish* Service.' He continued by stating the following:

They are doing it because it makes them look good and I think with athletics, you see the whole idea of P.R. [Public Relations]. Look at what the football team is doing, look at what these basketball players are doing. It's not about really doing anything. It's about doing it so there is P.R. there that makes them look good. Selfless would be "I don't want cameras around, I don't want newspaper folks around, I just wanna do this. Leave me alone. It's not about me." And that's what I mean by '*Selfish* Service.'

In addition to Carlos' observations, Lauren also noted the athletic department as having attempted to implement the values for public relations purposes. Although she acknowledged the importance of maintaining a positive image, the portrayal of such values with wrong motivations or a lack of authenticity negates the attempted implementation, thus tarnishing the image:

And I think that might trickle down from the administration and coaches. You do want to look good in front of people, but your motivation, and really in your heart of all hearts, you're doing it for all the wrong reasons.

Based upon these statements from internal university stakeholders, perceptions of attempted implementation do not appear to be received or viewed in a genuine manner.

From an external stakeholder perspective, these viewpoints were not much different. After acknowledging the association and implementation of core values for purposes of public relations, Caleb provided his perspective concerning the result of such actions related to using core values strictly for such purposes:

Then, the only real response to values you have is when you're asked certain questions in a public interview and you know what type of answer you're supposed to give. Then, your team players and your coaches can know "We're probably supposed to say something that sounds like 'I have integrity' and so I'll say this."

Although his viewpoint was clear and concise, Caleb further provided a potential avenue for the effective implementation of the core values within the athletic department:

But how much different would it be if a coach in an interview can say "Our team set these goals this year because they're in line with what the athletic department charged us to do. They're in line with what the university core values are. We're Texas A&M. We represent Texas A&M. We're about integrity and so here's the way that we, as the basketball team, are efforting to display integrity..." Now, all the team sees the vision, the reporters, the public, the newspapers, etc. start to get the vision of what values really drive these teams. That can be a great recruiting tool as far as bringing in the types of character people that you want to get on your teams.

Athletic department boosters acknowledged a lack of consideration given to the core values by administrative personnel. Contrary to other stakeholders, boosters did not attribute athletic department personnel with implementing the core values for public relations purposes. However, they did not indicate administrative personnel as implementing the university core values. As briefly addressed in a previous quotation, Bob summarized the overall attitudes of all boosters interviewed for this study. Although certain teams, coaches, and student-athletes were considered to implement the core

values, the administration continued to be viewed as not actively implementing the university values:

I would question very little, any of the coaches and athletes, as far as how much they strive by the core values. Whereas I might question some of the things that go on in the administration... They're a little myopic that way.

As exhibited above, several stakeholders agreed that any form of core value implementation on the part of the athletic department was done for purposes of positive public relations. Such behavior was perceived as being rooted in ulterior image motives. Beyond that, stakeholders indicated a lack of emphasis and implementation of the core values within the athletic department administration. As revealed by stakeholders, this attitude primarily revolved around the athletic department administration, as opposed to the coaches and student-athletes.

Separation and Isolation of the Athletic Department

The initial themes in this investigation revealed a lack of emphasis placed upon the university core values as a whole within the athletic department and the attempted implementation of values for the sole purpose of positive public relations. Although the previous two themes indirectly allude to a micro based separation of sorts, stakeholders explicitly indicated separation on more macro levels between the athletic department and the university. As such, ten of the twelve stakeholders acknowledged some form of noticeable separation between the university and the athletic department. Jacob associated the actions and behavior of the athletic department by simply stating the term 'isolated.' After probing a little further, Jacob provided this example to illustrate and substantiate his claim regarding their removed nature:

The perfect example was in a meeting today on the Kyle Field renovation. I was the only one there from the university that wasn't with athletics. I'm working with [Southwest University] right now on a project there as well. You have their chief financial officer, their head of development, their chancellor, their athletic director, everybody in one room, representing all aspects of the university, all aspects of athletics, and you have a collaborate discussion... It creates artificial walls, barriers, and doesn't aide in communication, and it certainly doesn't fast track process. Process grinds and when you put up that many barriers or impediments, it's like water flowing through something. At some point, there's no more water flowing. If you keep damning it off, there's going to be some period it stops and, oftentimes, that's what happens and then it's on to the next thing. And coming back around, you find there's a lot of negative impressions and feelings that develop.

Even amidst his extensive experience within another Division I-A athletics program, Carlos' standard as an academic faculty member rises above success in the athletic arena. His viewpoint related to the difference between the mission of the athletic department compared to that of the university:

Because athletics, not just at this university, but I think especially in this university, the athletic department and athletics in general is so removed from anything having to do with what the university is about. We're here to educate students both to get a job, but just to educate them for the sake of them to learn, become good citizens, vote, and do community service or whatever. If that's what we're about, I don't see any of that in the athletics department.

Both Jacob and Carlos' experiences lead to a growing concern among stakeholders regarding the differences between the overall mission/values of the university and the overall mission/values of the athletic department. As briefly addressed in the outset of this theme, such differences are somewhat of a culmination between two micro based thematic emergences. However, this thematic emergence acknowledged more of a macro based perspective as it relates to the university and the athletic department. As reported by stakeholders, the separation begins with the differing purpose of the athletic

department mission and mantra ‘Building Champions’ (For the athletic department missions statement, see Appendix G). With her experiences as an athletic department tutor and undergraduate student, Lauren presented a unique internal perspective concerning this matter:

With the athletic department, their motto or value is ‘Building Champions.’ I don’t think that represents Texas A&M... You and I talked earlier about how I kind of feel that the athletic department is a separate entity and not a part of the university. They’re kind of in their own little world. Literally, they’re off campus, they’re not in the middle of campus, and involved with everyone. I think in order to rectify this problem or make the core values more important to athletics, they need to become more involved with the university... And the values could bring them together or has the opportunity to. They need something.

As a form of corroborative evidence, Neal presented an external, community based standpoint. Particularly relating to the lack of congruency displayed by the ‘Building Champions’ mission and the athletic department’s subsequent actions, Neal stated the following:

The concept of “‘Building Champions’ but having no loyalty” comes to mind when you have [an Athletic Director] that focuses on dollars and cents. I do understand that we are in an economic phase of the century that we are, but that the university’s swimming in cash and you see the athletic department depleted with cash and making some bad decisions, I wonder if new régime needs to come into place to make the right decisions.

This unspoken, yet ever present separation of the athletic department and the university is considered to be evident from the athletic department personnel as well. Although not the desired end state, Amy acknowledged a lack of cohesiveness between the two entities in providing an example of fickle relationships with previous university presidents:

I think it's being included in the University and [Current President] is fairly new, so it will be interesting to see how [he/she] does that. Different presidents handle that in a different way. [Current President] seems to be very inclusive right now and we hope that continues because that's positive for us. We want to be considered part of the University. We've had this kind of hands off "You're over there, your athletics, you pay for yourself, you do your own thing. We don't want to hear from you unless you have a problem." There has been some of that that we've had with presidents in this interim period between [Previous President] and [Current President].

With nearly forty years of experience in the athletic department, Amy provides a fitting perspective as she has had the opportunity to observe relational trends between the athletic department and the university over an extended period of time. From her perspective, the university leadership plays a vital role in the level of athletic department involvement in the university. David provides a similar account regarding the desire to retain close ties with the university. However, he notes an important comment regarding similar sentiments from the athletic department's desire to remain more detached from university initiatives:

If I was to judge us, I would say that we do a pretty good job of that [staying cohesive with the university], but that's coming from an athletic perspective. Somebody on the other side might say we don't do a good job. I know a lot of our athletic department want to stay separate, but we don't. We need to keep working at it. I think it can be better, but I think we do a pretty decent job of trying that way.

Such statements indicate a readily apparent lack of cohesion and potentially negative relations between the university and the athletic department. This confirms the attitudes provided by both internal and external university stakeholders regarding any form of separation between the university and the athletic department. Jacob provided a well-known analogy to describe the result of cohesion and alignment, or the lack of, between

the university and the athletic department. However, he determined core value congruency a mandatory action in order to fulfill such cohesion:

If your front porch is inconsistent with the rest of your house, then they're not working together. People don't drive by and go "Wow, that looks great!" They drive by and go "That's odd." When they do fit, it creates this cool looking house and this really unique place you want to visit that people want to go. I don't think we're there. I don't think we'll get there until those things [core values] are connected.

Lack of Leadership from the Top-Down

The final theme communicated the necessity of core value encouragement and involvement from athletic department and university administrative leadership. As evidenced by stakeholder responses concerning the implementation of core values within the athletic department, improvement is certainly needed in order to more fully embody the core values of the university. Specifically pertaining to the athletic department, stakeholders attributed any improvements to the athletic department's implementation of the core values to the overall administrative leadership. In response to a question involving his overall perception of the athletic department leadership as an executive staff member of the university, Jacob stated the following:

I would say isolated, insular... not one word, but a real lack of teamwork and collaboration from the top-down, which I honestly think obviously filters throughout an organization very quickly... I mean it doesn't mean that there aren't people in the athletic department that don't have integrity, but it starts from the top-down and how you do it, what you do.

Although Jacob's perspective was directed at the leadership as a whole, Caleb specifically identified the athletic director as the primary source for providing poor leadership in core value promotion. He recalled a recent situation from an acquaintance who previously worked for the athletic department:

...This one girl who has a young child, young family, and she wasn't making much money at all... She's one of the ones who got laid off, and yet [Athletics Director] gives [himself/herself] a [Lump Sum] raise. So, I'm choking on someone trying to put forth an image of integrity in pursuit of excellence, when you say "We've got to cut some people to save a certain amount of money" and then raise the manager. And I think as far as the administration goes, integrity would demand that the guy at the top, that is managing everything, is most responsible, immediately responsible for any problems that go on... And so that left a bad taste in my mouth and some other people's that I talked to about it as well. It really wasn't consistent with the ideas of integrity and excellence that we're supposedly putting forward.

Amidst the near consensus belief among stakeholders concerning the necessity of core value implementation at the administrative level, stakeholders did not attribute the lack of implementation solely upon the athletic department. In fact, most attributed the lack of implementation to the university leadership, mainly the Board of Regents, President, and Chancellor. From an internal perspective, Carlos and Jacob attribute any actions or behavior of the athletic department as being largely influenced by the desires and mandates of the university leadership. Carlos provided a simplistic, yet direct statement regarding such initiatives:

Leadership at this institution from what we were talking about all the way to the top with the Board of Regents and trickling down to the president and so forth; their idea of leadership is "Do what I tell you to do and everything will be fine."

Although Jacob noted similar sentiments, he additionally promoted the idea of university leadership adjusting their focus and attention towards modifying core value implementation expectations:

I think that they're not carried over because there's not been leadership at the presidential or chancellor level here. As a result, it hasn't been properly filtered down to everybody else. [Athletics Director] works at their behalf. If they were to say "Listen, these are the standard behaviors

were expecting and if you can't do this, then we're going to let you go." That would be pretty clear direction... At the end of the day, they [University Leadership] are the guideposts or your guiding light that hopefully, from a university standpoint, keeps you centered.

External stakeholders exhibited similar perspectives concerning the necessity of university leadership and implementation. From an athletic department booster perspective, Crystal adhered to the belief that the core values are neither encouraged nor practiced by those in such leadership positions:

I think the reason many of us are distressed about some of the political goings on that pertain to Texas A&M is because they are not in line with the values of Texas A&M. In general, the top leadership does determine the tone of the university or anything else...

As a university alumni and involved community member, Caleb echoed such sentiments concerning the necessity of university leadership initiative. However, he provides further recommendations regarding future avenues for maintaining a form of 'checks and balances' among university and athletic department constituents:

I don't see, from my perspective, that there are mandates being given from the president to the Board of Regents to make sure that these values are communicated within each program and displayed in certain ways. In recent years, there's been a lot of turmoil in the presidency. It's not all the president. I think there's obviously a Board of Regents that would have some impact, trickle-down impact to communicating those ideas, core values, to the athletic director or the athletic department staff. But if there's not some consistent reminder of "Restate the vision, restate the mission, restate the core goals and values," and asking them how they're practically doing these things... then I think they just become something you put on your website or your wall or use as a recruiting tool, and the people that are in the program don't know them anymore.

Yet, Caleb continued by acknowledging the present reality, as opposed to the mere potential, for such implications if the university leadership neglects the seriousness of its own stated core values:

But, again, that goes back to “Is the university that intense on them displaying, the communication of, the implementation of their core values” because you could have an athletic department that’s just as close in function and practice with the university administration as can be, but if the university administration is aloof about their own value system, then the athletic department is going to be aloof about their value system. So, it depends on the implementation level at the university level as to how that will be transferred down to the athletic department.

Although stakeholders acknowledged a lack of core value implementation by athletic department personnel, university leadership was ultimately deemed responsible for setting the guidelines and example for expected behavior, particularly pertaining to core value consistency.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Research Question #3

Based upon the preceding themes, the final research question sought to assess the subsequent implications regarding the behavioral congruency of the athletic department with the stated core values on the Texas A&M University brand.

Consistent and Accurate Representation of the Brand

Sevier (2006a, 2006b) notes the importance of brand congruency and integration at all levels of the university. As such, a university must maintain “coherence in projecting institutional image” and consistency “in coordinating all aspects of communication and services, and in identifying with a credible set of values and type of behavior” (Belanger et al., 2002, p. 226). With the increase in national media exposure, intercollegiate athletics have become a fundamental tool for marketing the brand of a university (Roy, Graeff, & Harmon, 2008). However, such brand association is accompanied by responsibility; a responsibility to accurately represent the university brand. Several Division I-A athletic department’s claim to serve as the “window to the university,” representing and promoting the university mission and values (e.g., University of Arizona, University of Minnesota, Florida Atlantic University). While this may be a true statement in other institutional settings, this does not appear to be the status quo at Texas A&M University.

As exhibited by the findings, there were different attitudes displayed toward the university as compared to the athletic department. Specifically, stakeholders

acknowledged the athletic department's administrative inconsistency with the stated university core values. Both Bob and Caleb maintained the necessity of core value consistency between the university and the athletic department. As a long time booster and promoter of athletics, Bob still specified the need for administrative congruency on the end of the athletic department:

My perception is that they're not together. I have a lot of problems with that. It's the congruency that we talked about that, my feeling is, there should be no difference. And the athletic department should be one other department of A&M. And sometimes I think they forget that...

Accordingly, Caleb provided similar sentiments concerning the administrative responsibilities of the athletic department. However, his viewpoint was more directed at the responsibility of the university leadership to determine and enforce such consistency:

I do think that they should and could maintain a congruent set of values. I believe that the university system as a whole is casting the vision for everything that's under the authority and that bears the brand of that university and represents that university. When an athletic team goes and plays in whatever location, they're not just representing that sports team and their family, they're representing that university... So, there is obviously a connection and I think the closer the athletic department can be to adhering, understanding, and implementing those core values, the better and the more successful they're going to be at really representing the university.

As indicated by the initial thematic emergence, winning was perceived to be a top priority among the athletic department administration. This is particularly complicated in Division I-A universities, where winning athletic contests is an unspoken, but ever present consideration. As previously stated by Amy, this mindset of "You've got to win or you're going to get fired" has pervaded the majority of Division I-A institutions, including Texas A&M University. Although prevalent over the last few decades, this

model of managing athletics has been met with much controversy and debate. While this motivation is not intrinsically wrong, the overwhelming emphasis of ‘Excellence’ equaling winning does not present the image of a balanced athletic department, nor does it fulfill the core values of the university. In reverting back to a previous quote provided by Bob, his statement clearly voiced his concern for the ‘tunnel vision’ of the athletic department administration:

But see, that’s interesting that they would say that because that’s a perception that we’re talking about, that we have, that’s where their myopic view is. Excellence to them [the administration] means winning, and there’s nothing else important, other than that. I think they’ve lost something in the translation of ‘Excellence,’ when they look at it that way.

Within the higher education setting, rarely is ‘winning’ identified as an institutional core value. This mindset proves problematic, as Jacob observes in the following statement: “If the only thing you have is winning and you don’t win... you’ve got nothing.” However, athletic administrators are clear in the expectations they operate under: win or else. These different drivers shape dissimilar behaviors which translate to actions that may not be consistent with the university brand image and core values. Institutionally, it appears simply more convenient to leave this as the “gorilla in the room” topic, unspoken but understood. This dichotomy is not a foreign concept to universities around the country. In fact, as exhibited in the third thematic emergence, separation and isolation of the athletic department from the university has become a commonly practiced and accepted model for athletic department operation and management. According to Beyer and Hannah (2000), the ‘big business’ of college athletics has aided in the successful separation and self-sufficiency of athletics from the

university (e.g., Frey, 1994; Thelin, 1994). Although the majority of Division I-A institutions submit to this traditional model of ‘big time’ college athletics, one university has chosen to implement a unique, yet effective model for athletic and brand management.

The ‘Inclusion’ Model at Vanderbilt

On September 9, 2003, Vanderbilt University announced its decision to eliminate the Director of Athletics position and fuse varsity athletics with recreational activities in the Division of Student Life and University Affairs. This decision was determined after much consideration concerning the university’s belief that athletics had drifted away and become “isolated and disassociated from the university” (Zillgitt, 2004, p. 1). At the time, there was no indication of the athletic department in a state of ‘brokenness.’ With the conclusion of the 2002 – 2003 season, the athletic department held the third highest graduation rate in the country (91%) and had never experienced any form of NCAA probationary penalties. Further, the grounds for such a drastic modification were not based upon a lack of revenue generation or the budget crisis. David Williams, Vice Chancellor for University Affairs and Athletics, stated “You had the university and then college athletics. We saw conflicting messages – and in our view, athletics is part of the university” (Powers, 2006, p. 1). Charged with igniting and implementing the change, E. Gordon Gee, then Chancellor of Vanderbilt, voiced his grave concern for the current state of intercollegiate athletics across the nation:

Nothing short of a revolution will stop what has become a crisis of conscience and integrity for colleges and universities in this country... Institutions of higher learning are in danger of being torn apart by the ‘win at all costs’ culture we have created for ourselves (Powers, 2006, p. 1).

Ultimately, the goal of this structural modification was the integration of athletics into campus life. However, according to Gee, there was a lack of value congruency between the university and the athletic department: “The value system of the university and the value system of the athletic department have diverged. We do not exist to play football. We do not exist to play basketball. We exist to energize students and create ideas” (Zillgitt, 2004, p. 1).

As the smallest and sole private university within the athletically prestigious Southeastern Conference (SEC), Vanderbilt has always been considered the conference exception. Although athletic successes had not defined the institution, rigorous enrollment requirements and prestigious academic accomplishments have distinguished the university brand from its conference counterparts. This model for athletic department management was the first of its kind to be implemented within a high-profile Division I-A conference. With the transition of athletics to reside under the university’s immediate authority, the newly created Office of Student Athletics, Recreation and Wellness was supervised by Vice Chancellor David Williams. In addition to the Director of Athletics position, several athletic department staff positions were eliminated, consolidating their positions with existing executive officers in the Division of Student Life. This newly created office called for four staff members, referred to as Directors of Sports Operations, to report immediately to Williams. In addition to fulfilling other student life tasks, each director was attributed authority over an equal number of varsity sports and was responsible for determining sport team schedules, budgets, and logistical operations.

The Resulting Effect. As anticipated, much controversy and debate ensued upon the initial decision to pursue such a non-traditional model for intercollegiate athletic administration. However, the effectiveness of such a transition can be measured by simple observations. The university and athletic department marketing teams have been combined and integrated into one efficient group. The development teams for both the university and athletic department are one entity. Campus organizations have become more accessible and feasible for student-athlete involvement and participation. Student-athletes are encouraged to ‘miss a few practices’ in order to partake in winter and summer study abroad opportunities. Freshman student-athletes are disseminated throughout on-campus housing, as opposed to residing in traditional athlete dormitories.

While maintaining traditionally stellar grade point averages and high graduation rates, student-athletes have also proven that such a modification does not necessarily inhibit athletic performance. Men’s and women’s basketball, for instance, compete for conference championships on a regular basis and are often represented in the ‘March Madness’ of the NCAA tournament. Baseball has established itself as a postseason fixture, consistently finishing in the top 10 every year. Women’s bowling delivered the university’s first national team sport championship in 2007. Even football, a traditionally weaker sport within the powerhouse Southeastern Conference, experienced more wins than had been witnessed in decades.

Amidst the university structural changes, coaches haven’t left the university due to the lack of a formal athletic department. Coaches are not treated as commodities with the overwhelming pressure to ‘win at all costs;’ rather, they’re offered long-term

contracts to ensure their tenure with the university. Following consecutive 2 – 9 seasons in 2003, head football coach Bobby Johnson was offered a 10-year extension, which eventually culminated in a 5 – 6 record and defeat over arch rival Tennessee in 2005. Following an uncharacteristic 1 – 3 start to the 2007 season, head men’s basketball coach Kevin Stallings was encouraged not to be concerned about the sluggish start and negativity of media critics. The end result showcased the Commodores in the NCAA tournament three of the last four years, with a Sweet Sixteen appearance in that 2007 season. Following a 38 – 27 record in the 2006 season, head baseball coach Tim Corbin was pursued by the esteemed LSU baseball program for the Tiger’s head coach opening. Corbin opted to remain at Vanderbilt and was rewarded with an SEC championship the following year.

Modifying the Model at Texas A&M. Certainly, this model of athletic operations and management is not for every university. Many stakeholders were concerned about the potential de-emphasis on athletics that this change would bring about. However, the opposite was true in the case of Vanderbilt, as the centralization of athletics within the university exhibited the high priority that the institution placed on athletics. Gee even offered salary incentives to university administrators for athletic success, thus indicating the importance placed upon athletics within the university. In other cases, the sheer size of the athletic department mandates the necessity of some form of athletics director and executive staff. However, these individuals could still be consolidated and placed within the central university setting.

Regardless, any indication of significant change is going to bring about skepticism and opposition from both internal and external university stakeholders. However, critics of the Vanderbilt model should consider the status quo of most athletic departments around the country. In the case of Texas A&M, the investment of millions of dollars in the ‘win or else’ model has yet to return significant dividends from a financial perspective. To their credit, A&M has experienced signs of increased winning over the past couple years with two national championships in track & field and one in golf. Yet, such increases have occurred in non-revenue generating sports, thus not impacting the financial health of the overall athletic department. Even amidst the \$70 million budget and annual \$4 million loan supplied by the university, the athletic department has yet to turn a profit in the previous few years. Worse yet, the outset of the 2009 academic year marked the beginning of the athletic department’s repayment of a \$16 million loan supplied to them by the university under the tenure of President Gates in 2006.

To be sure, an investigation of the opportunity costs for continuing to operate an athletic department under this model would be a worthy study. Based upon the findings from this investigation, however, the current model does not appear to positively impact or reinforce a consistent, singular university brand. As exhibited by the ‘Separation and Isolation of the Athletic Department’ theme, stakeholders indicated the need for a more unified nature regarding congruency with the core values of the university. Any consideration to mirror the model similar to that of Vanderbilt should strive to fulfill the mission and core values of the university, promoting a clear, consistent brand to stakeholders and external publics. Although such a model may not result in the

placement of athletics under the immediate jurisdiction of university administration, an abridged strategy should not be completely ruled out as a viable solution.

‘Trickle-down effect’ of Leadership and Long-term Vision

Successful implementation of a single set of core values seems relatively straightforward to assess. Whether successfully implemented or not, organizational embracement should be reflected by consistent ownership and characterization throughout all organizational (in this case, university) levels. Effectively implemented core values should be as clear to the part-time graduate assistant as they are to the university president. Although specific applications and interpretations may differ slightly, the principles must remain fixed and clearly understood. However, according to the final thematic emergence, stakeholders made it clear that athletic department and university leadership were not actively considering the core values in decision making processes. One explanation for this lack of consistency may revolve around the high turnover within the Texas A&M University administrative leadership.

Since the Fall of 2002, Texas A&M has sworn in four different university presidents that, without question, influence and implement differing approaches to institutional management. Consequently, it’s likely for each president to have weighted the importance of core values more or less significant than the previous president. Bob referenced this dynamic by contrasting the practices of the current president with that of a previous president:

I would say, under [Previous President], it was very important to [him/her] that everybody went by those same core values. As far as [he/she] was concerned... [he/she] felt very strongly that there should be no difference between any one part of A&M and the other part... Because we’ve had

several changes since [he/she] was here, I don't get that as strongly from where we are right now. I know, we know [Current President] fairly well, and [he/she] is very concerned about athletics. [He/She] feels athletics has a very important part in the university, but whether [he/she] really believes the same way [Previous President] did about that, I'm not sure.

This fluctuating emphasis on foundational core values, in turn, affects implementation practices at all levels, including the athletic department. Yet, it should be acknowledged that the core values of Texas A&M have not changed and, according to research, should not change. As revealed by Collins and Porras (1996), core values “will change seldom, if ever” (p. 67), while the surrounding environment, strategies, and practices must adapt to the shifting world. Such environmental changes include personnel transitions within the university and athletic department administration.

Necessity of ‘Checks and Balances.’ These inconsistent, mixed messages concerning core values have the tendency to create somewhat of a post-modern decision making process for athletic staff, coaches, and student-athletes. Caleb described the necessity of some form of accountability system for ensuring the long-term vision of the university and core value implementation within the university:

There's so much free reign to manage their own business. I don't see, from my perspective, that there's mandates being given to remind, from president to Board of Regents, to make sure that these values are communicated within each program and displayed in certain ways.

This form of an accountability system was termed ‘checks and balances’ by Jacob. With extensive experience in other industries prior to his current executive position with the university, Jacob provided a possible explanation for the status quo concerning core value importance and implementation at Texas A&M:

Those checks and balances are what keeps organizations in check. When you're a kid, it keeps you in check. Your parents keep you in check, the checks and balances they have on you, your friends, everybody. That's how people learn to behave and how they work. When you take those away, things just tend to go off in some direction that is unplanned and unforeseen, and that's how I view what's happening right now.

Due to the scope of this investigation, the 'checks and balances' implication was not provided by all stakeholders, nor probed further than very brief comments by a limited number of stakeholders. However, additional investigation into this form of core value management and vision preserver would be a worthy and necessary endeavor.

Limitations

As with any research investigation, there were several limitations and restrictions pertaining to this study that are necessary to address. The first limitation relates to the chosen methodology for this investigation. Although the application of the qualitative analysis was an effective methodological strategy, additional quantitative analysis should be considered for a more detailed understanding of the themes revealed in this investigation. Further, quantitative analysis may better develop the relative importance and impact of the combined constructs implemented for this research.

The second limitation affecting this study is the relatively small sample size of interview participants. The small number of participants in this study limits the research from gaining a multitude of responses. However, as earlier noted, qualitative analysis is designed to gather a more in-depth, detailed account of interviewee experiences, rather than a broad generalization as typically seen with quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, additional interview participants may have produced additional insight and thematic emergence. Within this study, as addressed in the data analysis, sampling was considered

complete once a data saturation point was reached, thus informing researchers that additional interviews may or may not prove beneficial (Singer, 2009).

The third limitation relates to the race/ethnicity of stakeholders interviewed. Interview participants consisted of eleven Caucasian individuals and two Hispanic individuals. With this in mind, additional insight could be gained from individuals of differing race/ethnicity (e.g., African American, Asian). The fourth limitation also relates to additional diversity among participants. However, this diversity relates to the additional or potential stakeholders of Texas A&M University. For instance, additional stakeholder groups may include students planning to attend the university or stakeholders not geographically involved with the Bryan/College Station community. This investigation employed stakeholders who currently attended or were employed by Texas A&M University, or who lived in the Bryan/College Station community. Such perspectives may provide additional, unique insight into different attitudes toward the university.

The final limitation relates to the broad nature of stakeholder groups interviewed (e.g., current students, alumni, faculty/staff members, community members, athletic department personnel, and athletic department boosters). This decision to assess multiple stakeholder groups limited the individual detail provided from each group. Focus on a specific stakeholder group would have allowed for more detailed findings. However, the purpose of this specific implementation was to gain a broad perspective of overall stakeholder attitudes towards the athletic department's congruency with university core

values. Different perspectives from various stakeholders was desired for complete, overall coverage of university stakeholders.

Future Research

The Texas A&M University brand has embraced the same core values over the majority of its existence as an institution of higher learning. As discussed, one would expect to find differences in style and implementation related messages, but demonstration of consistency in the values themselves. Of certainty, however, is the unclear and less structured definition of the core values within the athletic department setting. Lack of consistency concerning core value definition and promotion slowly produces an excessive interpretive ‘gray’ area relating to the values. Further, a few stakeholders acknowledged the necessity of ‘checks and balances’ among organizational constituents and levels. Thus, additional investigation into awareness and perceived objectivity of the core values, as well as a subsequent accountability system among athletic department staff members, coaches, and student-athletes would prove beneficial. Such research endeavors would aid in the establishment of a clear, ‘wholistic’ branding strategy based upon an accurate reflection of the core values.

In discussing the core values themselves, stakeholders also noted the necessity of certain values building upon one another. Although not extensively discussed in the findings, stakeholders specified that certain core values could not be fulfilled unless other fulfillment of values preceded them. For instance, several stakeholders mentioned the importance of specific values, such as ‘Integrity’ or ‘Respect,’ that must be present in order to fulfill the core value of ‘Excellence.’ Currently, Texas A&M lists all six core

values in no particular order. Thus, future research should also consider investigating the weight and placement of each value. Such a scale should subsequently be objectified and applied to the athletic department setting.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate stakeholder attitudes toward the athletic department's behavioral congruency with the stated core values of Texas A&M University and assess the subsequent implications for the university brand. The findings made a significant contribution to the limited literature on core value congruency within the athletic department setting. Implications communicated the necessity of a consistent and accurate representation of the Texas A&M brand at all university levels. Further, the implementation of a unique, potentially more effective model for core value congruency and brand management was presented. Finally, the necessity of promotion and implementation of the core values from university and athletic department leadership was recommended for core value effectiveness and brand consistency. Although this study was not without limitations, it provided a foundation for additional research opportunities.

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APPENDIX A

Texas A&M University Traditions

12th Man

The tradition of the Twelfth Man was born on the second of January 1922, when an underdog Aggie team was playing Centre College, the nation's top ranked team at the time. As the hard fought game wore on, the Aggies were forced to dig deep into their limited reserves because of injuries. Coach Dana X. Bible remembered that a former squad member, who was playing basketball at the time, was in the press box helping reporters identify players. His name was E. King Gill. Gill was called from the stands, suited up, and stood ready throughout the rest of the game... which A&M finally won 22-14. When the game ended, E. King Gill was the only man left standing on the sidelines for the Aggies. Gill later said, "I wish I could say that I went in and ran for the winning touchdown, but I didn't. I simply got ready and waited--just in case I was needed."

This gesture was more than enough for the Aggie Team. Although Gill did not play in the game, he had accepted the call to help his team. He came to be known as the "12th Man" because he stood ready for in case the eleven men on the gridiron needed him. That spirit of readiness for service, desire to support, and enthusiasm helped kindle a flame of devotion among the entire student body; a spirit that has grown vigorously throughout the years. The entire student body at A&M is the Twelfth Man, and they stand during the entire game to show their support. The 12th Man is always in the stands waiting to be called upon if needed.

This tradition took on a new look in the 1980's when Coach Jackie Sherrill started the 12th Man Kick-Off Team, composed of regular students through open tryouts. This 12th Man team performed very well and held opponents to one of the lowest yards per return averages in the league. Later, Head Coach R.C. Slocum changed the team to allow only one representative of the 12th Man on the kick-off team. The 12th Man tradition exists also in musical form; the student body sings "The Twelfth Man" after each game in which the Aggies are outscored.

Midnight Yell

Yell Practice began as a post dinner activity in early 1900's, when different corps companies would gather together to "learn heartily the old time pep." However, it was not until 1931, that Midnight Yell Practice, as it is known today, was held before the t.u. [University of Texas] game. It began, when a group of cadets were gathered in Peanut Owen's dorm room in Puryear Hall. Someone suggested that all of the freshmen should fall out and meet on the steps of the YMCA building at midnight. The cadets notified senior yell leaders Horsefly Berryhill and Two Gun Parker of their intents. Although it

could not officially be authorized, they said they may just show up. Needless to say, the word spread quickly, and when the freshmen began to arrive, there were railroad flares and torpedoes stuck in flower pots around the YMCA building to light the area. The first Midnight Yell had begun!!!

Today, Midnight Yell is held the night before a home game in Kyle Field and at the Arches on Thursday nights before away games. Also for an away game, a site is designated for a Midnight Yell in the city of our opponent the night before the game. For example, for the t.u. game, it is held at the Texas Capitol in Austin. For a yell at Kyle Field, yell leaders lead the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band and the Twelfth Man into the stadium. The yell leaders lead the crowd in old army yells, the school's songs, and tell fables of how the Aggies are going to beat the everlivin' hell out of our opponent. Finally, the lights go out, and Aggies kiss their dates. If they don't have a date, all they have to do is "flick their Bic." As the story goes, the flames make it easier for two dateless people to find a kiss! The purpose of Midnight Yell is to pump up the 12th Man for the next day's big game!

Gig'em

Pinky Downs, class of 1906 and a member of the Board of Regents from 1923 to 1933, is credited with the Gig 'Em hand sign. At the 1930 Yell Practice before the TCU football game, Downs shouted out, "What are we going to do to those Horned Frogs?" Answering his own question, he replied, "Gig 'Em, Aggies!" while making a fist with his thumb extended. A "gig" is a spear-like tool used for hunting frogs. The gesture became known as the first hand sign of The Southwest Conference.

Howdy

"Howdy" is the official greeting of Texas A&M University. It is our way of ensuring that no one feels like a stranger. The exact origin on this tradition is not known. However, "Howdy" is what sets us apart as the friendliest campus in the world.

Bonfire

The first Aggie Bonfire began in the early 1900's as a pile of wood and trash next to the train station. The cadets decided to make a Bonfire to congratulate the football team on their win. Although this first Bonfire was held in the early morning hours of November 18, 1907, the first on-campus Aggie Bonfire was not held until 1909. Bonfire grew immensely through the years. The largest Bonfire was in 1969 and stood 109ft., which is only one foot shorter than Rudder tower. After that, the administration decided to regulate the Bonfire height to 55ft.

There have been two years that Bonfire did not burn. First, in 1963, following the death of President John F. Kennedy, the senior class made one of the most difficult decision of

their time at Texas A&M. In honor of their president, they decided to dismantle the Bonfire, which had recently been completed. The head yell leader at the time, Mike Marlowe, was quoted as saying, "It is the most we have and the least we can give." The second time that Bonfire was built and did not burn was in 1999. On November 18th, Bonfire fell, taking 12 of our fellow Aggies with it. This day was one of the most trying days for Aggies everywhere. At this time, Bonfire has been postponed indefinitely and no one knows if Bonfire will return. The Aggie Spirit has created the Aggie Traditions and that Aggie Spirit will thrive through the trying times.

Reveille

Reveille, the first lady of Aggieland, is the official mascot of Texas A&M University. She is the highest ranking member of the Corps of Cadets, and she is a Five-Star General. Reveille I came to Texas A&M in January 1931. A group of cadets hit a small black and white dog on their way back from Navasota. They picked up the dog and brought her back to school so they could care for her. The next morning, when "Reveille" was blown by a bugler, she started barking. She was named after this morning wakeup call. The following football season she was named the official mascot when she led the band onto the field during their half-time performance. When Reveille I died on January 18, 1944, she was given a formal military funeral on the gridiron of Kyle Field. She was then buried at the north entrance to the field, as all Reveilles are, facing the scoreboard so that she can always watch the Aggies outscore their opponent. Before naming Reveille II, there were several other unofficial mascot, such as Tripod, Spot, and Ranger. It was not until a later Reveille that she was a full-blood Collie. The most current Reveille is Reveille VIII, and she was officially introduced on August 30, 2008.

Reveille is the most revered dog on campus. Company E-2 has the privilege of taking care of Reveille. If she is sleeping on a cadet's bed, that cadet must sleep on the floor. Cadets address Reveille as "Miss Rev, m'am." If she is in class and barks while the professor is teaching, the class is to be immediately dismissed. Reveille is a highly cherished mascot and receives only the best.

Silver Taps

By far, one of Texas A&M's most honored traditions is Silver Taps. Silver Taps is held for a graduate or undergraduate student who passes away while enrolled at A&M. This final tribute is held the first Tuesday of the month following the students' passing. The first Silver Taps was held in 1898 and honored Lawrence Sullivan Ross, the former governor of Texas and president of A&M College. Silver Taps is currently held in Academic Plaza. On the day of Silver Taps, a small card with the deceased students name, class, major, and date of birth is placed at the base of the Academic Plaza flagpole, and the Silver Taps Memorial located behind the flagpole. Around 10:15 that night, the lights are extinguished and hymns chime from Albritton Tower. Students

silently gather at the statue of Lawrence Sullivan Ross. At 10:30 pm, the Ross Volunteer Firing Squad marches into the plaza and fires a twenty-one gun salute. Buglers then play a special rendition of Silver Taps, by Colonel Richard Dunn, three times from the dome of the Academic Building: once to the north, south, and west. It is not played to the east because it is said that the sun will never rise on that Aggies life again. After the buglers play, the students leave from Academic Plaza in complete silence. Silver Taps is a sacred tradition that Aggies treasure dearly.

Replant

It is one of the largest student-run, environmental service projects in the nation. It was originally developed by Scott Hantman to replenish some of the trees cut for the Bonfire. In the Spring of 1991, he joined Bonfire leaders and planted 400 trees. In 1994, it became a SGA committee that works year-round coordinating the event. They are sponsored by Texas A&M, the National Tree Trust, and the Army Corps of Engineers at Lake Somerville. Thousands of trees are planted each year by hundreds of student volunteers from A&M and the Bryan/College Station area. Trees are planted at local parks, schools, and other public land properties. All trees are donated by the National Tree Trust (between 500-10,000 per year).

Corps

Texas A&M was established as a military institution, and the Corps of Cadets has played an important part in its history and development. Although membership in the Corps became voluntary in 1965, Texas A&M historically has produced more military officers than any other institution in the nation, except for the service academies. More than 200 of its graduates have become generals or admirals. More Aggies were commissioned and fought in World War II than men from West Point or Annapolis.

The Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M is not just another ROTC unit that might be found at most campuses. The 2,200 men and women of the Corps form the largest uniformed body of students outside the U.S. military academies. Although cadets can earn commissions as military officers, membership in the Corps itself carries no military obligation. In fact, only about 30 percent of graduating cadets are commissioned, while the rest pursue civilian careers. The Corps has more to offer than just military training. It is a tightly-knit group of students that offers camaraderie, as well as leadership training that is useful in all post-college careers. Texas A&M has rich military history. More than 200 of its graduates have become generals or admirals. More Aggies were commissioned and fought in World War II than men from West Point or Annapolis.

Aggie Ring

One of the greatest moments in the life of every Aggie is the day that he or she receives an Aggie Ring. This tradition began with the Class of 1889. The original rings were very

different from the one worn today because, at that time, several companies made different versions of the Aggie Ring. E. C. Jonas, Class of 1894, designed a ring that is similar to the ring worn today. There have been only slight changes to this design, with one exception; in 1964, the Legislature of the State of Texas changed the university's name from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas to Texas A&M University, and the name on the ring was changed accordingly. The Aggie Ring is one of the most symbolic of our traditions. Everything seen on the ring represents a value that an Aggie should hold. On the top is a large shield, which symbolizes the desire to protect the reputation of the university. The 13 stripes on the shield represent the 13 original states of America. The five stars on the shield refer to the phases of development of any Aggie: mind or intellect; body; spiritual attainment; emotional poise; and integrity of character.

The eagle symbolizes agility and power, and the ability to reach great heights. The large star on the side of the ring symbolizes the Seal of Texas. The five-pointed star is encircled with a wreath of olive and laurel leaves symbolizing achievement and a desire for peace. The live oak leaves symbolize the strength to fight for our country and our state. The leaves are joined at the bottom by an encircling ribbon to show the necessity of uniting these two traits to accomplish one's ambition to serve. An ancient cannon, a saber, and a rifle are on the other side of the ring and symbolize how citizens of Texas fought for their land and are determined to defend it. The saber stands for valor and confidence, while the rifle and cannon stand for a preparedness and defense. The crossed flags of the United States and Texas recognize an Aggie's dual allegiance to both nation and state. Traditionally, students wear their ring with the class year facing them to signify the fact that their time at A&M is not yet complete. During Senior Week at the annual Ring Dance, the student's ring is turned around to face the world proudly, just as the Aggie graduate will be ready to face the world.

Muster

Aggies gathered together on June 26, 1883 to live over again their college days, the victories and defeats won and lost upon the drill field and classroom. Eventually the annual gathering evolved into a celebration of Texas Independence on San Jacinto Day – April 21st. Over time the tradition has changed, but its very essence has remained “If there is an A&M man in one hundred miles of you, you are expected to get together, eat a little, and live over the days you spent at the A&M College of Texas.” Muster is celebrated in more than four hundred places worldwide, with the largest ceremony on the Texas A&M campus in College Station. Aggie Muster as we know it today is credited to E. E. McQuillen '20, who served as the Executive Secretary of The Association of Former Students. It is fitting that he was honored to serve as the first Campus Muster speaker. This year we are privileged to have Mrs. Brooke Leslie Rollins '94 to serve as the 2007 Campus Muster speaker.

The committee was recognized as a student organization in 1950. Like the tradition itself, the committee has transcended the eras and events throughout its history and

remained true to the timeless ideals of Muster. The Muster Committee is responsible for organizing and planning every aspect of the tradition, from speaker to barbeque, awareness to the Roll Call – this committee continues the livelihood of this great tradition year after year. The committee falls under the discretion of the Student Government Association. The 2007 Muster Committee is composed of 22 committee members, seven sub-chairs, and one chair. Their tasks vary among the five subcommittees: Awareness, Programs, Roll Call and Families, Speaker Selection, and Special Operations. Muster is a time to look to the past, present, and future... not only to grieve but to reflect and to celebrate the lives that connect us to one another. A gesture so simple in nature yet so lasting in spirit, Muster is the lasting impression every Aggie leaves with us; it reminds us of the greatness that lies within these walls, of the loyalty we possess, of the connection that binds us, and of the idea that every Aggie has a place of importance – whether they are present in flesh or spirit.

Big Event

The Big Event is the largest, one-day, student-run service project in the nation where students of Texas A&M University come together to say ‘thank you’ to the residents of Bryan and College Station. For the past 25 years Aggie students have participated in this annual event to show their appreciation to the surrounding community by completing service projects such as yard work, window washing, and interior/exterior painting. Although The Big Event has become the largest one-day, student-run service project in the nation, our message still remains the same – simply “thank you.”

Fish Camp

Every year nine hundred counselors willingly give up time and effort in order to welcome Texas A&M’s greatest and most important tradition: The Freshmen Class. Through a 4-day orientation program held in Palestine, TX, freshmen are given the opportunity to learn Aggie Traditions, ease their way into college life, develop leadership skills and create bonds that will last a lifetime.

T-Camp

It has been said that when an Aggie graduates, the most important thing he/she walks away with is not the diploma or Aggie Ring, but the connection to the Aggie Family. Transfer Camp, or T-Camp, is a 3 day, 2 night, extended orientation program that introduces transfer students to the many opportunities that exist at Texas A&M and the long-standing traditions that embody the true meaning of being an Aggie. The idea for T-Camp came from transfer students themselves; they wanted an extended orientation experience similar to Fish Camp, but specifically for transfer students. T-Camp became “A Transfer’s First Tradition” in 1987. Today, this student-run organization is composed of over 100 current students, and welcomes around 500 new Aggies into the Aggie Family each year.

APPENDIX B

Texas A&M University Core Values

Texas A&M University Purpose Statement:

- To develop leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good.

Excellence – Set the bar.

“Excellence stems from a great sense of pride in who we are and what we believe in.”
(Former Texas A&M president)

“There’s an optimism, a faith in the future and an attitude that propels Aggies to take on the impossible – look at Red/White/Blue-Out.” (Texas A&M Leadership)

“We could do just about anything if we tried hard enough.” (Former Student)

- Center for Teaching Excellence
- University Honors Program
- Texas A&M University Vision 2020 Plan
- Texas A&M University Research

Integrity – Character is destiny.

“The Aggie Code of Honor which Aggies recite by heart: ‘Aggies do not lie, cheat or steal nor tolerate those that do’ shows what goes to the heart of being an Aggie.” (Texas A&M Leadership)

“Integrity was the core value that A&M gave me more of than any other. It helped me succeed in my career because my fellow professionals, clients and friends knew that they could rely on me and my word.” (Former Student)

- Aggie Honor System Office
- Texas A&M University Code of Conduct

Leadership – Follow me.

“If you don't want to be a leader of character, don't come here.” (Former Corps Commandant)

“The spirit of leadership is instilled in every student - whether they go on to lead in the boardroom or in the backyard - they have the values, the confidence and the experience to lead change in their world.” (Texas A&M Leadership)

- Texas A&M Student Government Association
- ATMentors
- Memorial Student Center

Loyalty – Acceptance forever.

“Through unity, strength.” (Texas A&M University Corps of Cadets Motto)

“I’m proud to be a part of a family that will always be there for me that’s 48,000 members strong...and that’s not counting all those that came before or will come after.” (Current Texas A&M Student)

“Loyalty and respect for tradition is about a sense of belonging to something greater than yourself. You’re a part of a history of traditions... of a larger community.” (Former Executive Vice President and Provost)

- Association of Former Students
- Texas A&M Traditions

Respect – We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we.

“A&M students aren’t just joining a university, they’re joining a lifelong family that understands the value of loyalty, camaraderie, and unconditional support.” (Texas A&M Leadership)

“A&M students embody a refreshing spirit: born of the values of friendliness, caring, support, confidence and a can-do attitude.” (Former Student)

- Aggie Muster
- Diversity at Texas A&M

Selfless Service – How can I be of service?

“If I had to tell you about Aggie values in one sentence I would simply ask the question: How can I be of service?” (Current Texas A&M Student)

“A&M encourages volunteerism, encourages being one of a thousand points of light, helping others... and it comes naturally to Aggies.” (Former U.S. President)

- Aggie Habitat for Humanity
- Aggie Relay for Life
- Big Event
- MSC FISH
- MSC Hospitality

APPENDIX C

Table 1: Demographic Information of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Stakeholder Category	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Sex	Former Student
Lauren	Current Student	Caucasian	23	F	Yes
Matt	Current Student	Caucasian	22	M	Yes
Katie	University Alumni	Caucasian	35	F	Yes
Caleb	University Alumni	Caucasian	34	M	Yes
Josh	Community Member	Hispanic	65	M	No
Neal	Community Member	Caucasian	34	M	Yes
Amy	Athletic Dept. Personnel	Caucasian	61	F	Yes
David	Athletic Dept. Personnel	Caucasian	57	M	Yes
Jacob	Faculty/Staff Member	Caucasian	53	M	Yes
Carlos	Faculty/Staff Member	Hispanic	39	M	No
Crystal	Athletic Dept. Booster	Caucasian	70	F	No
Robert	Athletic Dept. Booster	Caucasian	68	M	Yes
Kathy	Athletic Dept. Booster	Caucasian	65	F	No

APPENDIX D

Information Sheet for Interviewees

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the impact of core values within the institutional setting. Approximately fifteen (15) people will be asked to participate in this research endeavor. The purpose of this study is to investigate stakeholder perceptions of core value implementation within both the academic branch and athletic branch of the university.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer various questions regarding your experiences and perceptions of Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University athletics. This study will occur once, in an interview format, for approximately thirty (30) minutes to sixty (60) minutes. The risks associated with this study include potential discomfort associated with the reflection upon negative experiences with Texas A&M University. Although there will be no tangible compensation for your participation, the benefits of participation include the opportunity to further reflect upon the positive experiences with Texas A&M University and Texas A&M University athletics.

With your permission, interviews will be audio-taped for credibility purposes. During the transcription and documentation processes, your name will be assigned a pseudonym to preserve your confidentiality. The records of this study (i.e., information gathered during the interview) will be kept in a locked office and will only be accessible by Michael Hutchinson. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Texas A&M University. If you decide to participate, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable. You can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University being affected.

For any additional questions or concerns, please contact:

Michael Hutchinson
(281) 682-9373
mdhutch49@hlkn.tamu.edu

Dr. Gregg Bennett (Advisor)
(979) 845-0156
gbennett@hlkn.tamu.edu


For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board through the Office of Research Compliance at:

Melissa McIlhaney
IRB Program Coordinator
Office of Research Compliance
mcilhaney@tamu.edu

979.458.4067

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions, and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of this information sheet for your records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Hutchinson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Hutchinson

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Interviewees

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the impact of core values within the institutional setting. Approximately fifteen (15) people will be asked to participate in this research endeavor. The purpose of this study is to investigate stakeholder perceptions of core value implementation within both the academic branch and athletic branch of the university.

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Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions, and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of this informed consent sheet for your records.

Participant Name: _____ Researcher Name: Michael Hutchinson

Signature: _____ Signature: 

APPENDIX F

Interview Questions

Introductory Grand Tour Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself, including where you've been and how you got to where you are today.
2. Tell me about your history and relationship with Texas A&M University.

Questions regarding TAMU, TAMU core values, the TAMU athletics:

3. What aspects/qualities of TAMU do you identify with? Why are these important to you?
4. When you think of TAMU, what are some words that best characterize their behaviors? Explain.
5. Are you aware of the Texas A&M University core values? Do they make sense to you?
6. What aspects/qualities of TAMU athletics do you identify with? Why are these important to you?
7. When you think of TAMU athletics, what are some words that best characterize their behavior? Explain.

Questions fusing TAMU and TAMU athletics:

8. Which core values do TAMU athletics represent in their actions? How so? Provide examples.
9. Which core values do TAMU athletics not represent in their actions? How so? Provide examples.
 - If the athletic department behaviors are not consistent with the TAMU core values, why do you think these qualities/values are not carried over to the athletics department? Explain.
 - If the TAMU athletics department does not implement the university values, then what values do you think are encouraged and implemented? Provide an explanation and examples if possible.

- Does the implementation of core values in athletics have an impact on winning?
- Does the lack of TAMU values enacted by the TAMU athletic department or certain TAMU sports impact your attitude towards them or impact how you follow them?
- Do you see a difference between the behaviors of the athletic department administration and the coaches/student-athletes?

Questions regarding the TAMU core values and brand:

10. Are certain values dependent upon other values?
11. What impact does the TAMU leadership play in the implementation of the core values?
12. Do you think TAMU and the TAMU athletics department should maintain a congruent set of values?
13. Do you view TAMU and the TAMU athletics department as one entity or separate entities? Why?

APPENDIX G

Athletics Department Mission Statement

Building Champions

Texas A&M Athletics is committed to Building Champions through academic achievement, athletic excellence and national recognition of our student-athletes, team and programs. We provide our student athletes with all the necessary tools for them to be Champions in their sport and in life. The integrity of our program is rooted in the tradition and spirit of Texas A&M to bring honor and distinction to our University.

APPENDIX H

Table 2: Terminology Associated with TAMU and TAMU Athletics

	TAMU Terms	Frequency	TAMU Athletics Terms	Frequency
Similarities	Integrity	6	Integrity	2
	Loyalty	5	Loyalty	1
	Tradition	3	Tradition	2
	Leadership	3	Leadership	2
	Service	2	Service	2
	Respect	2	Respect	2
	Friendly	2	Friendly	1
	Excellence	1	Excellence	2
	Proud	1	Proud	1
	Camaraderie	2	Camaraderie	1
Differences	Family	2	Winning	2
	Honesty	1	Insular	1
	Culture	1	[Ulterior] Motives	1
	Independence	1	Corrupt	1
	Entitlement	1	Money-focused	1
	Naivety	1	Isolated	1
	Followers	1	Publicity	1
	Exclusive	1	Intensity	1
	Biased	1	Communication	1
	Entrepreneurial Spirit	1	Personal Development	1
			Effort	1

VITA

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EDUCATION

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Doctor of Philosophy | Texas A&M University, 2010
Major: Kinesiology Emphasis: Sport Management

Committee: Gregg Bennett (Chair), John N. Singer,
Paul J. Batista, and William M. Pride |
| Master of Science | Texas A&M University, 2008
Major: Kinesiology Emphasis: Sport Management

Committee: Michael Sagas (Chair), Gregg Bennett, and
Ben Welch |
| Bachelor of Science | Mississippi College, 2006
Major: Business Administration |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Assistant Professor of Sport Management (August 2010 – present)
 - Coastal Carolina University: School of Health, Kinesiology, & Sport Studies, Division of Recreation and Sport Management
- Graduate Teaching Assistant (August 2007 – July 2010)
 - Texas A&M University: Department of Health & Kinesiology, Division of Sport Management
- Graduate Research Assistant (October 2006 – July 2007)
 - Texas A&M University: Department of Health & Kinesiology, Division of Sport Management